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WINTER
1956

A FANTASY
PUBLICATION

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An Amazing Novel
by HENRY KUTNER

SPACE COMMAND

An Astonishing Novel
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STORIES

The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction



Vol. XXV, No. 2
Winter, 1944

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Manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes, and are submitted at the author's risk.

February, 1944, issue

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

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A Department Conducted by SERGEANT SATURN

WELL, what d'you know, here we are up in the front this issue, where the astrogation chamber of an orderly space ship ought to be. Now don't let this shift of gravity throw you, kiwis; the old Sarge will explain it all in due course.

Before we launch into this issue's music of the spheres as interpreted by you space-dizzy pee-lots, let us consider the plight of Ronald P. Maddox of 87 Utica Street, Hamilton, N. Y. Ronald is at a loss. He doesn't know where his nearest SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE chapter is. He would appreciate it if the closest local chapter would communicate with him so he can brush his hair and knock the rocket dust off his shoulders and appear at the next meeting.

So, will the chapter nearest to Hamilton, N. Y., drop Ronald a card and bid him welcome?

To blast on with the anvil chorus. Shake out the asbestos-lined mailbag, Frog-eyes, while the old Sarge lets the grease monkeys out of their rocket sleeves. Gather around the chart table, all you kiwis, and we'll proceed with the briefing—and beefing.

GOOD COVER

By Jay F. Chidsey

Dear Sarge: Hearing the new TWS was out, I lost no time, and two weeks or so later I could be found in a certain drugstore purchasing IT—the mag. He charged me for it this time instead of holding it out with one hand (his other on his nose) and screaming for someone to take it away. I figured it must contain something good this trip.

I liked your cover; gad, how I liked your cover! I nominate it for the cover of the month. . . it not only lacked the guy-gal-BEM tricorner fast becoming synonymous with S-F, but it was good art. You reserve a distinct pat on the back. I hope other readers comment on this favorably also. What we want are more REAL pix, ART, more unearthy stuff and less of thud-and-blunder.

Best pic was for THE BUBBLE-PEOPLE. You have a fine thing in that contest, by the way. If and when I ever convince myself I can write (as just about every other fan has) I'll send you a story for the reject slips.

DAYMARE was your best story. Second came BUBBLE PEOPLE, and PROMOTION TO SATELLITE followed at a bit of a distance. Others not exceptional. Somehow I found a sinister resemblance between the Nelsbond story and a certain yarn entitled "Beyond Light." Frankly I didn't like it the first time and it hasn't improved with age.

This was rather hard on Bond, of course. Since the plot was entirely different except for the imprisoning in a room, the trough of chemical, and emptying

stuff into it. Different chemicals, different setting, different result.

With a request to get Robt. Bloch. . . I remain . . . yours wit' luv—Green Springs, Ohio.

We gather, says the old Sarge dryly, that you liked the Fall cover, Pee-lot Chidsey. No comment here. There are a couple of kiwis in the back room who will comment at greater length a bit later on this artwork. Maybe I'll shake all you junior astrogators together at that time in one sack—preferably the Coal Sack.

Comes now a report from the city of Fords.

THIS AND THAT

By Kent Bone

Dear Sarge: I was strolling through the store one day, in the merry merry month of September, when I was taken by surprise, by the idiot of eyes, Good old TWS. (That September doesn't go so well, does it?)

"Man From the Stars" by Williams was "the" yarn in the ish. The way he put in the sound, made by the exile, made the yarn much more interesting. "Daymare" by Fredric Brown tied with "Peril on Phoebeus" for second.

"The Bubble People" by James Henry Carlisle, III. It seems that the prize winning amateur stories always top the professional shorts.

"That's Just Like a Martian" by Welman and "Light in Darkness" by W. Morrison, are next on my list.

I guess I don't like Ray Bradbury because I've never read a story by him that I've liked. In other words I didn't like "Promotion To Satellite."

The best of the Special Features was, as usual, The Reader Speaks.

Aw! Come on Sarge. Can't you get that great artist Bergey a rest?

About a week ago I bought a book called The Pocket-Book of Science-Fiction. In it was a story taken from TWS. Its name is "A Martian Odyssey" by Stanley G. Weinbaum. This story was the best in the book. I think it is one of Weinbaum's greatest stories.—2577 Ferris Ave., Detroit, Michigan.

We think A MARTIAN ODYSSEY a great story, too, Kiwi Bone, and worthy of inclusion in an anthology of scientification yarns. Everybody is not going to agree with you about Ray Bradbury, but that's your worry. The old space dog is not going to lock horns with you. I can get better and bigger head-aches from other forms of activity.

The next ethergram is from a frugal soul who tightly types his message on two small sheets, single-spaced. Glad the stars aren't packed that way.

AWAY WITH CARSTAIRS

By Austin Hamel

Dear Sarge: I liked the Fall issue of TWS very much, except for one or two things. Your mention

(Continued on page 10)

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Let's try again. "Dear Joe, I've been working pretty hard and haven't had a vacation in over a year, so . . ."

Better cross that out, too. They don't ever get vacations where Joe's staying.

Well, what are you waiting for? Go ahead, write the letter to Joe. Try to write it, anyhow.

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THE READER SPEAKS

(Continued from page 5)

of a John Carstairs novel in a future issue of SS, for one. Please, Sarge, tell me that was a mistake in the printing. F. B. Long is probably one of the worst SF writers at the present time. In the latest Reader Speaks six out of seven readers did like WOBBLES ON THE MOON, which is a John Carstairs yarn. And, since John Carstairs deals mainly with BEMs, I'm sure of BEMs on the cover.

The Fall issue of THRILLING WONDER STORIES was quite good, but the last few were better. The art was surprisingly good, with a swell cover, but doesn't Bergey get tired? As for the stories:

1. DAYMARE: Although I dislike dicks in SF, this was a darn good yarn. I really liked this mystery—4 Xeno jugs.

2. PERIL ON PHOEBUS: I expect much better from Bond—3½ Xeno jugs.

3. LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS: Although Morrison seldom comes across with an excellent novel, you can always depend on him for a good science yarn—4 Xeno jugs.

4. PROMOTION TO SATELLITE: Quick, where did you get this guy from? Hang onto him with all your might for shorts! This was one of the best stories in the mag, although the science was not good, will forgive that for a great little story—6 Xeno jugs.

5. THE BUBBLE PEOPLE: Okay for an amateur—3½ Xeno jugs.

6. THE MAN FROM THE STARS: The story was good, the science again was poor. Where did the stars come in?—5 Xeno jugs.

7. THAT'S JUST LIKE A MARTIAN: So this is the beginning of a new series? Well, it didn't start off so hot, but it looks like it will turn out better in the next story—2 Xeno jugs.

The art was good, as I said before. Who did the drawing for PERIL ON PHOEBUS? THAT'S JUST LIKE A MARTIAN? Also, DAYMARE? Kindly tell me for my records. By the way, what was Otho doing on the index page? Please tell me if there are any SFL clubs in the Bronx.—2090 E. Tremont Ave., Bronx 68, N. Y.

Liberal sprinkling of question marks, Kiwi Hamel. If you would just slip a few washers and wing nuts on them we could have a space-man's repair kit of patches all fitted out. I'll try to cap a few of them for you. Wesso illustrated PERIL, Thomas did the MARTIAN, and Orban did DAYMARE. Otho is a visiting fireman.

As for the SFL activities in the Bronx, will some of you kiwis give Pee-lot Hamel your attention?

Next we have a little bull from Buffalo.

QUARTERLY COMPLAINT

By Kenneth J. Krueger

Dear Sarge: I got a complaint. I didn't holler for TWS to go monthly like a lot of other kiwis. I didn't holler when we didn't get our annual. But when you made TWS a quarterly, that was the final straw. That was almost as bad as the cover on the Fall issue. (Better even a BEM.) By the way, speaking of the cover (and who was?) I was glad to see Rudy Vallee crooning to his men through a megaphone. It cheers me up to know where he is. I know you're going to catch it from everybody else for the cover and for going quarterly, so I'll let it slip by and charge it to experience.

Now to get down to the stories. Well, what do you know—there are some good ones in this issue. Number one, of course, was MAN FROM THE STARS, by Robert M. Williams. A nice bit of work, that. It would have made a good novel for STARTLING STORIES. Number two—THE BUBBLE PEOPLE, by James Henry Carlisle, III. This story nearly took the first position. It was something new and different. I hope he can write more when he shortens his name.

Number three—PROMOTION TO SATELLITE, by Ray Bradbury. A good story. Number four—THAT'S JUST LIKE A MARTIAN, by M. W. Wellman. Author's name is the only thing to put this story in this position.

Number five—PERIL ON PHOEBUS, by Bond. He has written many good stories. This is not one of them. Number six—LIGHT IN DARKNESS, by William Morrison. This could have been left out and never missed, but the idea of the two pairs of

eyes seeing by different color schemes was unique.
I won't bother to give DAYMARE a rating. It is one of the worst pieces I have ever read in your magazine. In a detective mag it might have been good. And you rated it along with THE DEVIL'S FIDDLE, remember? You've been hitting the Xeno bottle too hard lately, Sarge.

Well, that's about all for now. But if you stay quarterly after the war and paper shortage is over—I will personally drown you in plain everyday beer.
—183 Edna Place, Buffalo 8, N. Y.

To the point, Kiwi Krueger, but not very short. And, never fear, all three of our scientific magazines will resume their regular wont as soon as possible. Maybe even oftener publication. That depends on you junior astro-gators. And you needn't tell the old Sarge how to ration his Xeno.

SAVE ROOM FOR ADULTS

By Don Campbele

Dear Sarge: (to be read aloud in a high, nasal tone) "I am six years old and I read CF, TWS, SS, WPA and OPA every issue. I have my own rating system (who hasn't?) and it goes, in successive order of interest—Bam, Zowie, Pop, Swish, Glug, and Phooey. For the last issue of TWS—DAYMARE: Bam. The cover pic was good, too," etc., etc.

That, Sarge, is a typical letter sent you. Please, sir, are all your readers morons or infants? F'hev-vins' sake!

As for enjoying your publications, I have been reading THRILLING magazines for two or three years now, and have yet to find a flop. While other mags seem to be crying for *anybody* to write stories for them, you seem to have your pick. All the same, it seems a shame to waste all that talent on the type of people who still like Fatty Arbuckle and the Keystone Cops.

Now don't get me wrong. There are some readers who appear to have one or both feet on the ground. I find that in the last ish a guy named Marty Seligson holds the same views as I. Yet, Sarge, you call him down for taking shots at those who take shots at others. I am a peaceful man, but I'm willing to join Seligson in the battle for more coherent reading material.

There was a good example of fine letter-writing from a cadet at Camp Davis, yet you buried it deep in the department where people would never read it, having grown disgusted trying to wade through the others. Put your best letters in front!

I hope you can find space for this letter. I would really like some of the Happy Gang to find out what some of us think of their literary carousings. If another missive appears to say essentially the same thing as I do, only saying it better, by all means, print that—only please don't let those infants hog the whole department every issue.

But who am I to be giving advice to Sergeant Saturn—the best slinger of subtle sarcasm in *any magazine*?—Somewhere on duty, United States Navy.

So? You unload a full cargo on the old space dog and then steam out of port and leave me holding the bag, eh? Okay, Kiwi Campbele. I'll just shake this sack of clinkers out along the path and let the other junior astro-gators kick pebbles around. You know, sailor, the old Sarge personally has no time for fiction. He only prints the letters which come in. If they aren't erudite enough to suit, some of you adult critics write in more often.

What you see in it, I'm not responsible for.

Let's blast on now for a few gentle remarks from Ohio.

1943 REPORT

By Chad Oliver

Dear Sarge: With the Fall issue consumed hungrily by yours truly, another year has come and
(Continued on page 114)

NEXT ISSUE'S NOVEL

STAR OF TREASURE

By CHARLES W. HARBAUGH



"I'm **TIRED** of being
just a Bookkeeper

I'm going to be an Accountant
—and make **REAL** money"

WRITE TO

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A Correspondence Institution

Dept. 2329-H

Chicago 15, Ill.

I'd like to prepare for a good accounting job. Send me your free booklet and full details about your training.

NAME

POSITION

ADDRESS

CITY AND STATE



I Have Lived Before--

Says Aged Lama

CAN WE RECOLLECT OUR PAST LIVES?

IS THERE a strange familiarity about people you have met for the first time? Do scenes and places you have never visited haunt your memory? Are these proof that the personality—an immaterial substance—can survive all earthly changes and return? How many times have you seemed a *stranger to yourself*—possessed of moods and temperaments that were not your own?

Prejudices, fears, and superstitions have denied millions of men and women a fair and intelligent insight into these *yesterdays of their lives*. But in the enigmatic East, along the

waters of the once sacred Nile, and in the heights of the Himalayas, man began a serious search beyond this veil of today. For centuries, behind monastery walls and in secret grottoes, certain men explored the *memory of the soul*. Liberating their consciousness from the physical world to which it is ordinarily bound, these investigators went on *mystical journeys* into celestial realms. They have expressed their experiences in simple teachings. They have disclosed whereby man can glean the true nature of self and find a *royal road* to peace of mind and resourceful living.

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Palms jingled and tingling, Danton slid down to the floor

A GOD NAMED KROO

By HENRY KUTTNER

When Dr. Horace Danton Is Transported to Burma and Made the High Priest of a Tibetan Deity, He Becomes the Startling Storm-Center of a Series of Fantastic Events!

CHAPTER I

Gods Can Die

There were no temples, but sacred enclosures surrounding fetiches and images. All creatures living in these sacred precincts, or even straying into them by accident, were taboo and became the property of the god . . .

—Reinach: Orpheus

KROO brooded over his yak.

After ten years, he had become attached to the creature, concentrating upon it all the paternal affection a greater god might have given his worshippers. But Kroo had no wor-

shippers any more. The last of these had died half a century before, and his son had turned Buddhist. Thus Kroo was become a god without devotees—always a saddening thing.

It always happened, of course. Marduk, Allatu of Babylon, Ormazd, and Osiris died gracefully, and so did most of the forsaken gods who preferred limbo to forgetfulness. Yes, they had been wiser than Kroo, who was a minor tribal deity in the Himalayas, naive and untraveled.

Born of ignorant peasant minds, he

AN AMAZING COMPLETE NOVEL

took after his parents. Once blood sacrifices had been offered to him—now the villagers shunned the weedy temple yard on the outskirts of the town. They still held a slight fear of Kroo and the malignant powers he could use, so they did not molest his house. They ignored it, which was much worse. No one ever entered, no one had for years. That is, except the yak.

The yak knew no better. Wandering in search of forage one night, he had snapped his rope and burst into the court through the tumbledown fence. In the morning the natives found him there. Kroo still remembered the sly, cunning faces that had peered in at the yak.

"Call him, quick," one had said. "Dho-ni will never know."

Kroo shook with rage at that perfidy. The blasphemous little squirt! He'd steal the property of the gods, would he? Well—

About to do something drastic, Kroo paused as Dho-ni, the ancient lama, came on the scene, withered as a mummy in his coarse blue robe. He understood the situation at a glance.

"Back!" he croaked. "The yak belongs to Kroo now." He entered the temple yard.

"But he is mine," a sad-faced, gaunt native protested. "I need his strong back. How can I—"

"Be silent. It is your own fault for letting the beast wander. Now he is Kroo's, and sacred."

AT THIS Kroo allowed himself to smile faintly as he remembered. Dho-ni was a bigot, of course, but he respected tradition. So the yak had remained, and just now it was lumbering about the yard like a shaggy bundle of brown straw looking for a good spot to lie down. Finally it stopped, lowered its fore-quarters with the utmost caution, let its colossal bulk drop slowly to the ground, and sighed. The yak ruminated. Kroo sneered.

Other gods might die—weak, milk-and-watery deities—but not Kroo. He came of good, sturdy peasant stock, with tenacity as one of his cardinal virtues.

But it was not pleasant to think of the pomp and grandeur of the courts of Babylon and Nippur, the mighty temple of Karnak, the thousands of altars where other gods had been worshipped. Real altars—not a chunk of weathered stone from which even the last trace of bloodstains had faded. Kroo felt weak from emotional reaction. He knew what that sign meant.

He was growing old. He was dying. For fifty years he had been slowly starving to death, lacking the necessary nutriment of prayers, sacrifices and belief. The villagers did not really believe in him any more. They were merely not quite sure, a little afraid, and unwilling to take a chance.

Unless Kroo got worshippers—and soon—he would die.

He was too young to die. He had never lived. For a second he was blind with jealous envy of the greater gods than he, whose miracles had filled thousands—millions—with terror. Kroo could work miracles too, but his audience was strictly limited. What he needed was an acolyte. A high priest. If only one of the natives would wander into the temple yard . . . but there was not the slightest chance of that.

Kroo lifted his shaggy, uncouth head and listened. There was argument outside the fence. A group of villagers were expostulating with a—a white man! The god's vision swept out. He saw a lean, hard, tight-mouthed face and cold blue eyes that were alight now with anger. Kroo listened.

"I need a yak," the white man snapped. "We lost two in an avalanche, and the other beasts are nearly exhausted."

"Why not leave behind some of your booty?" came the naive suggestion.

"My equipment? Mmpmph. It took me six months to collect, at the cost of chilblains and frostbite, and I'm taking it back with me—all of it. Why the devil won't you sell me that yak? Or rent the beast. I'll send him back once I reach the river."

"Dho-ni is away on a trip."

"When will he be back?"



The Japanese soldier seized Deborah by the wrist

"Who knows? Many moons, perhaps."

Money clinked. There was a stir of movement among the villagers. Apprehensive glances were cast around as each man looked at his neighbor. After all, Dho-ni was away and gold was gold.

But tradition triumphed. "Nay Peling. We cannot sell."

The white man threw a handful of coins on the ground. "I'm buying. I need that yak. And I intend to have it." He turned and went toward the temple yard. The natives made no move.

And Kroo, leaning forward tensely on his hams, sucked in his breath and smiled as Dr. Horace Danton entered the fenced enclosure.

So the next day the white man and his party moved east and then south, toward India. Though Danton had never covered this territory before, he trusted implicitly in his native guide, who had come with high recommendations.

JIENG looked rather like an untrustworthy monkey, but he had been to Lhasa, the Forbidden City, and had guided parties into the interior and back for years. He wore little beside a leathery smock and a sharp-bladed *kukri* in a wooden scabbard, and his legs were hairy, though his face was not.

The towering ranges of the Himalayas guarded the travelers as they went on, crossing gorges, descending perilous paths, cursing the yak when it became recalcitrant, and not noticing that they were followed by a small, black thundercloud.

Danton's thoughts were occupied elsewhere. His expedition had kept him in exile for nearly two years, but now he could return to America, having fulfilled the commission the museum had given him. It would be interesting to see New York again. And to pause, for a week or so enroute, at Hawaii.

The uninformed Dr. Danton wondered how the European War was getting on. Well, he'd soon find out, at the nearest outpost that boasted a radio. The rumors that filtered into the interior of Tibet were few and distorted. Danton

wondered vaguely whether Japan had given up hope of conquering China yet. He trusted so. As a logical man, he objected to long-winded futility. Well, the matter scarcely affected him, unless he passed through a war zone. He'd take good care not to do that, for his specimens were too valuable to be lost.

Under the circumstances, it came as a considerable shock to Danton when the yak inadvertently became the subject of a miracle.

The common yak—or as pedants call it, *poephagus grunniens*—is a gigantic, shaggy muscular creature which resembles a moving mountain. To see such a beast wallowing or walking is unsettling to one's equilibrium. And to see a yak levitated—!

The affair happened on a trail that wound dangerously down the side of a sheer, dangerous precipice. The party was proceeding in single file, feeling their way delicately, when a small white animal, probably a rabbit bounced up directly under the foremost yak's blunt nose. The yak emitted a hoarse, anguished cry, made clattering noises with its hoofs, and fell into the abyss, taking with it a good deal of shale, and the yak Danton had purchased at the Tibetan village. The dead silence of great altitude was broken by the roar of a minor avalanche.

Danton saw the whole thing as he instinctively flattened himself against the rock beside him. The first yak kept falling. So did the shale. But the other yak dropped only about a hundred feet and then paused. It hung in midair, a misshapen dark mass, and then slowly began to rise. Danton's eyes altered in size.

The yak rose until it was level with the path and slightly above it. The beast was upside-down, and looking at Danton with a glazed and singularly pathetic stare. It suddenly revolved in the air until its feet were underneath, slid sideways, and dropped an inch or two so that it was once more safely upon the trail.

A faint splash heralded the doom of the yak that was not under Kroo's protection.

From the natives came an outburst of chattering. Jieng quieted them by waving his *kukri* and making it glitter in the sunlight. He peered at Danton out of bright little eyes and waited.

Danton gave the signal to continue. There wasn't anything to say, really. The impossible had happened. One can't readily comment on such things.

BUT Danton was more than usually alert after that. When they made camp at nightfall, he called Jieng to his small fire of dung-chips. The native squatted on his haunches and spoke in his own dialect, in which Danton was proficient.

"You saw what happened to the yak, Jieng?"

"*Pranam*," was the slightly irrelevant reply. "It was magic, of course."

"We of the west do not believe in magic."

"Many do not," said Jieng philosophically. "Even holy men who know a great many *mantras* are secretly skeptical. I had thought that the yak was a magician in disguise, or even a god, master. But when I put questions to him, he did not answer. Still . . ."

Danton pointed up to where a cloud obscured a few stars. "Have you—uh—noticed that?"

"Of course. A thundercloud, though not a large one. It has been following you ever since we left the village. Jieng shrugged. "I am an ignorant man, Peling. I know little of such things. Perhaps you have become a Living Buddha, or a *Gompo Lama*."

Danton made impolite and skeptical noises. "Rot."

"As you say, rot. But when a Living Buddha dies, his soul enters immediately into the body of a new-born babe."

"Well, I'm not a new-born babe. Incidentally, why have you set men on guard tonight, Jieng?"

"Hostile natives—they have been signaling about us since noon. I heard them."

Danton knew the keenness of Jieng's ears. "Think there's danger?"

"Perhaps. I have armed the men.



Danton was left on the steps of the powerhouse beside Deborah and the yak

But they are cowards, master, and afraid to fight hill-people."

"Well? Shall we break camp tonight and go on?"

"May the spirits forbid! The hillmen are waiting for that, so that they can pick us off one by one." Jieng's monkey face was impassive. He did not seem to care what happened. Dr. Danton mentioned this.

"Well, I worship Kali. Should I die, Kali would comfort me. She is a mighty goddess. A-i! What is that?"

Danton looked at the sky, cloudless save for a small black blot. "Thunder. Odd."

Jieng hunched himself together over the fire, looking like a leathern, ragged bundle. "I shall not mention—*her*—again. There is another god present, I think, and may my ancestors bear witness I am a tolerant man."

"All right. Let's get back to the—to what happened today. What do the men think about it?"

"Who knows? Only they bow to the yak whenever they pass him. Ow! Get your gun, quick! The dogs are attacking!"

This seemed all too true. There were shouts from the darkness beyond the camp. The moonlight was too dim to be of much aid, but nevertheless Danton sprang up, whipping out his revolver. It was handier than a rifle in such a scrap as seemed to be forthcoming.

The intermittent yells were like the baying of wolves. Occasionally Danton could see a black jumping-jack spring up and vanish again, while a spear would shoot into the firelight. The small figure of Jieng was busy exhorting the natives, who milled around in a confused mass. Abruptly they flung down their guns and fell on their faces. No use to fight, they figured. It was fate, alas. They burrowed their pug noses into the dirt and repeated "*Om mani padme hum.*"

Jieng ran back to Dr. Danton. "They will not help. What now?"

For answer the white man lifted his revolver and fired at a half-seen silhouette, which dodged, seemingly unhurt. There was another outburst of yells, the

pattering of feet, and a shower of spears. One blade cut Danton's sleeve.

The black cloud overhead, which no one was noticing at the moment, quivered convulsively, as though in rage. It muttered low, ominous thunder. And then a lightning bolt streaked down from it.

Well-aimed, it found a hillman, outlining him in white radiance. The man flung up his arms, shrieked, and fell dead. Before he hit the ground another bolt flashed from the sky.

"What luck," Danton whispered.

Jieng said: "I would not call it luck. A-i! Another!"

A third streak of lightning darted from the cloud and disposed of a third hillman. Then another—and still more. Danton was irresistibly reminded of a sniper sitting calmly on top of that incredible cloud, carefully aiming and firing. The hillmen gave up and ran away. The lightning pursued. The unfortunate wretches scattered across the plain, but could not escape. Danton and Jieng watched as their quondam enemies were disposed of, neatly and noisily.

CHAPTER II

Kroo's Miracle

SLOWLY the cloud came back. It hovered directly over Danton, muttering faintly. Jieng, with a foreboding sound, departed. The white man was suddenly lifted into the air.

Briefly he was blind. Then his vision cleared. He was looking down on the camp and the vague, moonlighted plain. The prostrate bodies of his native carriers were piled in a heap. Jieng was a huddled black blot. Danton discovered that he was about forty feet above the ground, sitting on the edge of a singularly solid cloud.

Vertigo assailed him. He rocked forward and back, clawing at his support in a baffled manner. The whole thing was quite impossible. Moreover, he was in immediate danger of falling.

"Jieng!" he yelled.

Jieng looked up and began to salaam. The other natives made temporary white blurs of their faces and then followed Jieng's example. Danton cursed them dispassionately.

He was sitting on a cloud. That, in itself, was unusual enough to be noteworthy. The texture of the cloud, he discovered with tentative fingers, was rubbery, somewhat like a sponge. It was comfortable, as far as that went. Even an electric chair might be comfortable for a brief time. Finally, something was licking Danton's neck.

He gingerly turned his head to confront the bland, friendly gaze of the yak. The huge creature was lying down just behind him, and the propinquity of that Minotaur-like face was distressing. The horns looked dangerous, even though they had the texture of crumbly wood.

Something—either the yak or the cloud—rumbled. Danton didn't know which.

He looked down and yelled at Jieng. "Get me down from here, you benighted fool."

"How?" Jieng asked cogently, without ceasing his salaams.

The problem was solved at that point when both Danton and the yak were gently levitated back to the ground. Danton found himself sitting astride the beast. He hurriedly dismounted and burst into a cold sweat.

"Liquor," he said, rummaging in a knapsack. "Oh confound Tibet anyway." He drank whisky and barked sharp orders to Jieng. "We're getting out of here. Right away."

"Soon," said Jieng. "The carriers wish to thank the god who saved us from the hillmen. He must love you. The yak is probably sacred to him."

"Rot," Danton snarled, thinking of Gampo Lamas and Tibetan adepts. "It's hypnotism or something. Nay," he went on, his voice suddenly thickening, "thou hast beheld the power of Kroo. Kroo the All-Wise! Kroo the Terrible! Bow down and worship Kroo!"

"Ya! Kroo is great!" the diplomatic Jieng remarked hastily, and prostrated

himself, as did the other natives.

Danton, standing aghast, stared down at the salaaming group. Why in the dickens had he said that?

He hadn't. The words had come from his mouth without conscious volition of his own. He had listened as though someone else had been speaking.

"Get up!" he said irritably. "Don't—Kroo is great! Worship Kroo or die writhing and impaled."

"Ya!"

Danton ground his teeth together. He felt slightly mad. With urgent haste he recovered the whisky bottle and gulped the stinging fluid.

HIS voice boomed out. "Go! Leave Kroo, who would speak privately with his High Priest!"

Instantly the natives, led in reverse by Jieng, began to wriggle away backwards, like crayfish. It was an unnerving spectacle. Danton didn't move till the last writhing figure had vanished in the outer darkness. Then he drank more whisky.

"I'm going crazy," he remarked. "Schizophrenic. Jekyll and Hyde. Two years in Tibet . . . ugh!"

"Be not afraid," his own voice broke in, deepened and roughened in tone. "Kroo speaks. Thou art dear to Kroo."

"I said it and yet I didn't say it," Danton gasped. "It's my voice, but—"

"Be not skeptical," he interrupted himself, again in the deeper voice. "Gods may speak through their High Priests. Or so it was in the old days. And I—I know all tongues you do, and a great many more as well. Put that in your pipe and smoke it," Danton finished, changing to English.

"I'm crazy!"

"No, but you're getting tight—that is, the spirits of the wine have begun to—" Danton broke into a stream of searing, extremely vulgar oaths in an obscure Tibetan dialect. "Okay," he went on at last. "So I'm a peasant god. What the blazes! If I'd been the god of a lot of super-civilized stuffed shirts, I could talk their lingo. But I wasn't. Mud and blood conceived me. And what was good enough for my first worshippers is

plenty good enough for these modern children of noseless mothers. *Vashang-ya!*" Danton didn't recognize the word, but it sounded like an oath.

He finished the bottle and broke open another. The whole thing was quite unreal.

He was alone in a vast, cold emptiness lighted only by the tiny fire and the distant brilliance of the stars. The natives had disappeared. He was alone, and talking to himself.

"Jieng!" he yelled. "Come back. *Nay—return at your peril, verminous dogs!*"

Danton started in on the other bottle. It helped. It helped a good deal, especially when things lost their hard outlines and became a bit fuzzy. After that, it did not seem quite so strange to be sitting here conversing with . . . himself?

No—

"Are you still skeptical?" Danton asked.

"Gosh, yes," he replied, briefly.

"Then you must be convinced."

"How? It's my own voice—"

"I use your throat and tongue as you would use a musical instrument. As I could use the yak—"

Danton fell suddenly silent. The yak lurched forward into the dim firelight.

"—Or any creature over which I had power," the yak remarked. "The beast throat is harder to use, for it isn't made to speak as humans do. Still, there it is. Are you convinced? If you are, we will talk further."

"It's hypnotism. Danton said stubbornly. "Maybe Jieng's doing it."

"*Mm-m.*" The yak paused.

Abruptly Danton began to rise into the air. He dropped the bottle and yelled.

"Do you believe yet?" his voice inquired.

"No!" Danton gasped. "Hallucina—"

He shot up like a rocket. The air became perceptibly colder.

"Do you believe?"

"N-n—"

"I can't transport you to the moon, but I can take you halfway there before my power weakens. When you find yourself believing in Kroo, say so."

Danton gulped hard.

THE ground dropped away, the mountain peaks, white with glaciers, looking like a relief map far below. Danton was rising fast. He experienced difficulty in breathing.

"Child of a wallowing ape!" his own voice demanded, painfully. "Will you speak—or die?"

Danton nodded. "I—believe—"

"You're more skeptical than a Gnostic. But okay." The upward rush was reversed. Presently Danton found himself hovering no more than five hundred feet above the encampment.

"Now," he said, in Kroo's voice, "we can talk."

"Yeah," Danton agreed weakly. "But I'd talk better if I had another drink."

"Why not?" The bottle appeared, flying up like a bullet. It came easily to rest in Danton's hand. "Drink! It's a good brew—sturdy, savage stuff, like *kumiss*. I am pleased that you have no taste for the insipid wines of the hot countries. The men of my birthplace drank *kumiss*. Once they lived near my temple where you bought my sacred yak."

A light broke over Danton. "Ah, then that was your temple?"

"How could you tell?" The voice was almost bitter. "A half-ruined hut! In a village of dead men—stupid fools. I was dying and in prison. I, whose worshippers have shouted and slain till the earth ran red—by Me. There's hot blood in my veins! Or there was. And it stirs again. High Priest, I want a temple."

"Oh? Well—"

"And I shall take one. I shall be great again. All men shall bow to me, and you are my High Priest."

"But I don't want to be your High Priest," Danton said desperately. "You need a—a lama, or a shaman. I wouldn't know what to do."

"When there's need, I'll speak with your tongue, as an oracle."

"Wait! Don't—"

"Will not Carruthers be pleased?"

"Not by the yaks, certainly," Danton said in a hopeless voice. "Look, can't I get out of this somehow? I've got to get back to the States—"

"All right. Where are these States?"

Danton thought fast. Back in New York, he would at least be in familiar surroundings, and less at a loss. He might be able to cope with Kroo. He *might*—

In any case, he'd be back home. And not completely alone, with not a white man for hundreds of miles around. He wouldn't be any worse off, certainly!

"East," Danton said. "Due east till you hit St. Augustine. I'll let you know."

"East it is."

Kroo's yak was levitated upward. Danton found himself sitting astride the beast. Below, the landscape slid away.

A thought struck him. "Hey, wait! I haven't paid the natives."

"Pay them, for serving my High Priest?" Kroo gave vent to an expletive that made Danton's lips feel soiled. The eastward progress continued.

CHAPTER III

Japanese Ways

YES, They went fast—for Danton. Kroo did not use instant teleportation, because he wanted to examine the strange new world in which he found himself. Not for centuries had he been out of Tibet. Moderns—what vast cities and temples might they have reared?

In an hour they were passing over Bhutan. Before dawn they crossed the Brahmaputra, and fled on above the northern tip of Burma. Beyond Sadiya,

where the railroad stops and the great jade deposits begin, Kroo noticed something of interest.

To tell the truth, he was a little tired. His vitality had run low through years of attrition, and, while he would not have admitted it to a human or even to another god, he was beginning to get cold feet. He was wondering about the new deities that had displaced Amon and Baal and Anubis.

Kroo had an inferiority complex.

It was not his fault. Kroo had not come of a sophisticated race. He was, as he had mentioned to Danton, mud and blood. In short, a peasant—a barbarian. Very often, centuries ago, he had writhed under the barbed taunts of more cosmopolitan gods who looked on him as a clod. Even in the days of his greatest power, Isis had called him *nouveau riche*.

And that hurt. Kroo realized his limitations, of course. He had little education and less culture. True, he had power—but all gods had that. Suppose he emerged into a modern world, where new gods reigned, sleek and debonair, and announced that he was Kroo?

The new gods might raise their brows, shrug, and turn away. Their sophistication might make them feel that Kroo was not worth knowing.

The ancient, savage god shook his heavy shoulders angrily. He'd show 'em! He might be a minor deity, but—

He sighed. Too well Kroo knew his pettiness. To think otherwise would be like expecting to be permitted into Godsheim after he died. Only the truly great

[Turn page]

"This Is Lance Cross, of Xanadu, Mars, Calling Professor Pericles Oliphant—"



THE MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE bewildered Professor Pericles. He knew that the Ninth Diktor of First City had decreed death for Lance Cross—that even now the Stapo was out hunting for the rebel. Well, the Professor, in his own quiet way, was a bit of a rebel too—and you'll be amazed at what happens when he dares to meet Lance Cross in *STAR OF TREASURE*, a fantastic novel of spatial adventure by Charles W. Harbaugh.

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

ones went there, certainly not the sick, weakened gods who died of faith-starvation.

But he was alive—had a new lease on life, in fact. Very well. He would rule. He would battle some small god and supplant him, reigning from the evicted one's temple and building up a new kingdom. Already he had a High Priest and a sacred yak. Next, a temple, and worshippers.

A temple—and here it was.

Myapur is a town in upper Burma, half native shacks, half more modern structures. A British engineer had done wonders in Myapur until circumstances had caused his death. The most notable structure was a well-built cement-and-metal powerhouse that had been the engineer's chief pride.

In the early dawn Kroo slanted down toward the powerhouse, sending an inaudible call before him. No answer came. The resident god was asleep, then, like Danton, who had relaxed comfortably on the yak's back Kroo's power supporting him.

Several men in uniforms were standing outside the powerhouse's doors. They jumped, startled, as the panels swung open. Kroo gave them a passing glance. They were short and stocky, with yellowish skins and dark hair and eyes. They had rifles.

Kroo sensed the danger of the weapons. He might have blasted the soldiers into ash, but just now he was on another god's threshold, and it behooved him to walk carefully. So, with foresighted courtesy, Kroo threw a veil of darkness around the powerhouse, and, in the blackness, swiftly transported Danton and the yak through the portal.

IT WAS indeed a temple. The altars were sombrely magnificent, great dynamos that, at present, were silent. Myapur had been blacked out all night, for fear of bombers. It was an especially strategic point to the invaders, so long as their occupation was not suspected by the British.

Kroo thought. The god wasn't here. Probably away, on a visit. Well, the best

defence is a good offense. Kroo decided to go in search of his unsuspecting enemy, scouting the ground to discover whether the enemy god was dangerously powerful. If so, Kroo would hastily go away. Otherwise—

Kroo showed his yellow tusches in a nasty grin. He went away, lifting the dark veil as he did so, and leaving Danton in the powerhouse, atop the impassive yak.

Kroo would be back later.

Meanwhile, hands gripped Danton and pulled him off his shaggy steed. There was a crackle of outraged questions and commands. Footsteps pounded through the powerhouse. The guards rushed in from the portico and screamed for gas masks.

"Hello," Danton said, blinking around sleepily at the uniformed men who surrounded him. "I've been dreaming—, no I still am." He shook himself, and the hands tightened on his arms.

The yak burped.

"Who are you? How did you get here?" an officer demanded.

Danton recognized the dialect. His suspicions were confirmed by the realization that he was in a *bona fide* powerhouse. Kroo was real, then. The god must have veered northward during the night, landing in Japan instead of skimming the Amami Islands on his way to America.

Danton had been in the interior of Tibet for two years. The uninformed archeologist beamed, relieved at being among civilized people once more.

His Japanese was not too rusty. "My name's—"

"Shoot him," someone suggested.

"No, take him to Captain Yakuni. He has given strict orders."

"But he is a spy!"

"Then he must be questioned. The Captain—"

"Hey," Danton said. "I'm no spy."

"Silence. What shall be done with the yak?"

"Drive him out, child of a greater fool than yourself."

"Listen," Danton broke in uncompre-

hendingly. "Give me a chance to explain."

"Silence. Come."

"But—"

"Silence."

There was silence. Danton was escorted from the powerhouse, leaving the yak to the ministrations of the soldiers. The yellow light of dawn hurt his eyes. He blinked, staring.

The powerhouse, he saw, was camouflaged by a thick growth of *champac*, mixed with a few teak and mahogany giants. To his right the ground fell away sharply into a deep gorge, from which the muffled thunder of racing water emerged.

In the distance was a *zayat*, half ruined now, but unmistakably a Burmese rest-house for travelers.

Burma? A powerhouse? Japs?

Danton battled his eyes. He was escorted southward, along a well-worn path, and down a steep, forested slope. Beneath him lay a village.

Pagodas confirmed his suspicion that this was Burma.

He glanced back. The powerhouse was invisible now. Only the sharp eye of a god could have detected its presence from above.

"This way."

THIS building had once been a temple, Danton saw. Now it was converted into something less esoteric. Guards at the door snapped a challenge. There was a brief interchange of remarks, terminated by the sound of a voice cursing dispassionately in Gaelic.

Danton was thrust forward.

A door opened. He found himself in a small room that had been efficiently furnished as an office. Seated at a table strewn with papers was a smiling, middle-aged Japanese who sported a beard. It was not much of a beard, thin, straggly, and looking vaguely moth-eaten, and it entirely failed to give the man an appearance of dignity. He looked up at Danton's entrance and nodded briefly.

The Gaelic oaths continued. Seated near the table was a dark-haired girl, slim, remarkably pretty, and wearing

slacks and a tight sweater that showed off her figure to advantage. She gave Danton a glance from under her long lashes, nodded, and continued her mystic profanity.

"Your pardon, Miss Hadley," the Japanese said, rising. "Pleasant as your presence is, official business must come first. If you will excuse me?" He spoke in excellent English.

MISS HADLEY grunted. "Okay, handsome. I'll stick around. Mind?"

The man waved a deprecating hand. "As you like. Now, Mr—?"

"Danton."

"My men tell me a rather remarkable story. Where is your plane? Or did you use a parachute?"

"What about introductions?" Miss Hadley put in, producing a thin cheroot and deftly biting off the end. "Find out his name before you have him shot. Then you can mention it in your reports to Headquarters."

"I apologize. Miss Deborah Hadley, may I present Mr. Danton—"

"Er— It's Doctor. Horace Danton. Glad to know you, Miss Hadley."

"Call me Debby," the lady said. "In return, I won't call you Horace. Never liked the name. This is Captain Yakuni, Dan. He's the current dictator of Myapur."

Yakuni bowed punctiliously. "Be seated, please. I have some questions."

"So have I, Captain. And a request. I'd like transport to Myitkyina."

"Oh? Not Mandalay? Or Rangoon?"

Danton chuckled. "I won't trespass that far on your hospitality. Myitkyina's far enough."

"May I ask your plans?"

"Oh, I want to get back to the United States. I picked up some interesting data in the interior, and I'm anxious to hand it over to the right people."

"Fine stuff," Deborah remarked. "Next thing you'll drag Pearl Harbor into the conversation."

Danton looked at her blankly. "What's Pearl Harbor got to do with it?"

"Look, Dan. Crazy people aren't

sacred in Myapur. They just get shot."

"One moment," Yakuni broke in. "Dr. Danton, why were you found in our powerhouse?"

It was difficult to answer that question without mentioning Kroo. Danton hesitated.

"I've been in Tibet for two years," he said at last. "I'm an ethnologist and archeologist. Connected with a New York museum. I've been collecting specimens and data."

"Indeed. Where are these specimens?"

"Uh—I sent them ahead. Now I've got a few questions. This is Burma, isn't it?"

YAKUNI nodded.

"You are correct."

"Well what are Japanese soldiers doing here? England hasn't ceded Burma to Japan, I'm sure."

Yakuni fingered his beard in silence.

"How did you reach Myapur?" he inquired, after a pause.

"I flew."

"From Tibet?"

"That's right."

"Where is your plane?"

"Darned if I know," Danton said hopelessly. "You see, Captain Yakuni, I've been in a state of hypnosis for a while. I prefer to think that, anyway. If I told you the truth, as I saw it, you'd think I was crazy. I know I'm not. But I do believe I was hypnotized in Tibet, and only snapped out of it a few minutes ago, in your powerhouse."

"Have him shot," Deborah suggested, waving her cheroot. "The loss would be small. He hasn't brains enough to be a spy."

Danton gulped. "What sort of foolishness is this? Captain Yakuni, I'm an American citizen. Bear that in mind!"

"I am," Yakuni said cryptically. He rose. "Would you care to inspect Myapur, Doctor? Miss Hadley will escort you."

Two soldiers seized Danton and forcibly removed him from the office. Deborah followed, winking at Yakuni. "Farewell, offspring of a toad," she remarked in Gaelic.

CHAPTER IV

Playing It Safe

OUTSIDE, Danton stood helplessly, not knowing what to do next. Deborah linked his arm with hers familiarly.

"Come along, Dan," she urged. "I want a drink. Never mind, Yakuni gave me a lot of occupation money. Down this way. I recommend a ginsling."

"Sure you won't poison it?" Danton asked, with a flash of wry humor.

Deborah shrugged.

"Yakuni's smart. That's why I told him to shoot you. He figures you may have important information, and you're more valuable to him alive. Little Tojo doesn't trust me any more than I trust him."

Danton glanced over his shoulder at the two soldiers who followed. "What's the idea?"

"They can't talk or understand English. Wish you could speak Gaelic, though."

"I can. I'm an ethnologist."

"Well, blow me down," Deborah said. "I thought an ethnologist told your fortune." Danton explained. He was still elucidating when Deborah dragged him into a dim, cool structure where *punkahs* swayed from the ceiling.

"Okay. So you're not a fortune teller. If I'd known that I mightn't have put in a good word for you. I thought you'd been with a carnny."

"Carnny?"

"Carnival. That's my racket. Beetle-puss!" she cried suddenly and a native shuffled out of the shadows, bowing. Deborah made a significant grimace as the Burmese grinned. "Ginsling. Chop-chop. Pronto. Raus!"

"*Aii!*" Beetle-puss nodded, and went away. Deborah relaxed at a table, and gestured for Danton to sit down. The Japanese soldiers found seats some distance away, their eyes intent.

"Now we talk," Deborah sighed. "First tell me all. No, let me. It'll go faster.

Meet Debby Hadley, the best dancer, singer, and shill in all Burma. Used to be with Hart's Traveling Wondershow. It broke up here months ago. I landed a job singing in a dive. When the Nippies moved in, I headed for a *sampan*. Too late. I got caught. Yakuni didn't have me shot. Probably because I called him everything I'd learned in eight years of carny work. Yakuni just grinned at me. 'You are free,' he said, like that. 'Myapur is yours. If you try to leave, you will be shot.' Now he sits back and licks his chops, waiting for my nerve to break. Meanwhile, I slowly go nuts, and maintain my morale by cussing him out in Gaelic, which he doesn't understand. End of story. Well?"

Danton gulped his ginsling. "Now wait a minute, Miss—"

"Debby."

"Debby. Okay. You haven't explained what Japanese are doing here in Burma. If Tokyo hears about Yakuni's actions, he'll be court-martialed."

Deborah narrowed her eyes. "You've really been in Tibet for two years? Haven't you heard?"

"I've heard nothing. Are England and Japan at war?"

"England and Japan!" Deborah said, clamping down on the cheroot. "Hal MacArthur somewhere around Australia, Jap subs shelling California, Tokyo bombed—and he asks me that. Brother Dan, settle back and listen."

SHE spoke cogently. When she had finished, Danton broke into a profuse sweat.

"Holy Mackerel, so we're at war."

"Just that. War."

"I still don't get the picture," Danton said. "How come there's a modern powerhouse in upper Burma? The only hydro-electric places are around Mandalay and Rangoon."

"It was built by the English—secret military strategy. They paid the local *sawbwa* and went ahead. Commissioned an engineer to set up the works."

"Then why don't they bomb it, now the Japs have taken over?"

"Because they'd rather recapture the

powerhouse as is. Look, mister, do you have any idea of the difficulty of getting machinery up the Chindwin? Dynamos and stuff? I don't know what goes into a powerhouse, but if the British took Myapur again and bombed the works, they couldn't set up more dynamos in a hurry. They'd rather wait. Besides, they don't know the powerhouse has any military value."

"Well, it hasn't," Danton said. "Unless there's oil around here."

"No oil. Jade, some rubies, that's about all. But the powerhouse ought to be bombed. Myapur's become a key point to the Japs. Yakuni makes eggs here, and sends 'em down the river to the Nippie flying fields scattered around."

"Eggs?"

"Very, very nasty little bombs. Tokyo got the formula from Berlin. Super-powerful stuff, and it plays havoc with the Allied bases."

Danton narrowed his eyes. "Liquid air?"

"Nope. Not nerve-gas, either. A pure explosive, with a secret formula. All I know is what Yakuni tells me. They load the eggs here, and they need electricity to make 'em work."

"Electrolysis. I get it."

"So the Allies don't know Yakuni's using Myapur as a manufacturing base to make those bombs. The Tojo flyers have been doing some nasty tricks with the stuff. Naturally, I've been doing my darndest to smuggle out word to the right parties."

Danton cast a swift glance at the Japanese guards. "Not so loud."

"The louder the better. They can't understand English. Can you fly a plane, Dan?"

"No."

"Well, I can. So that's all right. We'll see what we can work out. If we can get through, somehow, to the Allies, the bombers will come over Myapur and blow Yakuni's dynamos into the Yellow Sea. And there aren't any other dynamos near enough to help Tojo do what he wants."

Danton sipped his ginsling. "Could

we slip down river in a *sampan*?"

"That's out. Yakuni isn't dumb. You're a scientist. Make a radio. Then we can send a message."

"I'm not that sort of scientist," Danton pointed out.

She scowled at him. "Well, what are you? You haven't told me your yarn yet."

"Well, it's a bit hard. All I know is what I think happened to me. I've a hunch I was hypnotized."

"Tell Debby. I've a swell shoulder to cry on."

Danton sighed. "I suppose I might as well. You won't believe a word of it. I don't either. Still here goes." He explained about Kroo.

WHEN he had finished, Deborah regarded him with a look of impassive gravity.

Danton moved uncomfortably. "That's all. Say something."

"Okay. Let's have another drink."

They drank silently. After a while Deborah crushed out her cheroot and narrowed her eyes at Danton.

"Better forget about Kroo. Take it from me, he won't be back, unless you get the d. t's. Now listen, Dan. As long as Yakuni thinks you've got valuable information he won't kill you. He might try torture, but don't mind that. Keep him wondering how you got here, and why. He'll want to know whether the Allies suspect what he's doing in Myapur—making bombs. Give Tojo the old psychological one-two. Keep the conversation polite. He's nuts about modern culture. I made him plenty mad once when I called him an uncivilized rat. He didn't object to the noun, either. Get it? Play along, take it easy, and we'll watch our chance."

Danton nodded. "I'll do my best."

"Fine. But remember, if we can't get a message out, we ought to try and wreck the powerhouse ourselves, somehow. It sounds like a pipe-dream, but those dynamos supply the power for Yakuni's bombs."

"They convert the power, they don't supply it."

"So what? Put the bee on the dynamo, and where can Tojo get any more up here in Burma?"

"It'd be suicide."

"Sure," Deborah said. "Wouldn't it? Well?"

Danton nodded. "Count me in."

"Fine. Now let's take a walk around Myapur. I'm hungry. There's a leper by the river who sells swell *shishkabob*."

Deborah had a peculiar sense of humor.

CHAPTER V

Leave It to Kroo

GRANDLY Kroo rode the winds above Burma. Invisible, brutal, cunning, wary, the god spied upon the new world he had entered, and found much to frighten him. He went far afield. In the Pacific the ironclads roared their thunder, and planes battled and fell in grim combat. From Yokohama to Hobart, from Midway to Peiping in Russia and China and Germany, in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic, on the frozen peaks and in the blazing deserts, there was war.

It was no place for a little god.

Kroo fled back to Burma, his plans confirmed. He must play a waiting game, as Amon and so many others had done. First he must establish himself in a small kingdom, build up a monotheistic culture, and slowly expand by conquest. Since the days of the Old Men that had been the way. In the hour of the mammoth Kroo's people had warred on their neighbors, had triumphed, and had made new converts and spilled new blood on the basalt altars of Kroo.

A little kingdom—honest peasant stock, who would work hard and fight hard. The yellow-skinned, sturdy men Kroo had seen in Myapur seemed eligible. They reminded the god of the ancient Tartars and Kalmucks who had once worshipped him.

Ya! In Myapur Kroo would begin his

rule. Already there was a temple built and ready. As for the god it had formerly housed—well, he was away. Perhaps dead. Kroo would take care that he was not permitted to return. Only strong prayers can summon a god, and no one would make such prayers in Myapur, if Kroo could prevent it.

Definitely he could prevent it.

Kroo's flat nose twitched. Already he could smell the smoke of his offerings.

He headed back toward Myapur, and soon was hovering over the heads of Danton and Deborah Hadley as they strolled through the town. Crafty Kroo had reduced the texture of his cloud until it would hardly be noticed as he sailed along over their heads.

"The place is disorganized," Danton was telling Deborah. "I expected that. Occupation always upsets routine. We're the only whites in Myapur, eh?"

"We are now. A month ago—" Deborah shrugged. "The natives haven't yet adjusted themselves to slavery." She pointed to the window. "That isn't a normal bazaar. No yelling, for one thing."

It was true. The stalls were depleted, instead of brimming with food and other merchandise, and the Burmese had little heart for chaffering. Always they were conscious of the invader, watching, waiting for them to step out of line.

The two Japanese guards conferred, and one went over to purchase some fruit. He carefully paid for it with occupation money, which was accepted emotionlessly. Danton made a wry face.

"Civic improvements, yeah. No garbage lying around the streets for example. But the purpose isn't civic. It's military. Behold the power of Kroo!"

"Huh?" Deborah jerked her head around to stare at the man. "What goes? Oh, dear! To think three ginslings could do that. Dan, snap out of it!"

Danton's eyes bulged. He was slowly rising in the air, without visible support, and a small, dark thundercloud hovered over his head, pulsating slightly.

"Dan, come down."

"Kroo works a miracle," the horrified Danton heard himself roar, drowning out a chorus of cries from the natives. "Lo! Behold!"

"Dan!"

DANTON continued to rise, his face expressing stark panic. "Debby," he gasped. "It's Kroo. I—I'm hypnotized again—Dogs and unbelievers, forsake your false and weakling gods ere Kroo is roused to wrath."

"They'll shoot you."

Danton managed to turn his head. The Japanese guards, after conferring excitedly, had lifted their rifles and were taking steady aim.

"Don't shoot!" Danton yelled. "I can't help it!"

"Return or be shot," one soldier snapped. "You are forbidden to leave Myapur."

He spoke in Japanese, and Danton answered in the same tongue.

"Cast aside your weapons, lice, or be blasted to cinders. Kroo speaks!"

"Ha!" a soldier barked, and squeezed the trigger. Danton made a swift Immelmann that left him breathless. The thundercloud rumbled ominously.

"Look out," he gasped.

Lightning shot from the cloud. The guard dropped his rifle just in time. It became a fused, useless pretzel of blasted metal.

Simultaneously the yak came sailing over the rooftops, grunting impassively, and Danton found himself astride the beast, still about twenty feet above the ground. The Burmese natives were salaaming like mechanical toys wound up to the limit. Deborah was looking up, her head tilted back and her eyes incredibly wide.

"Kroo demands a sacrifice," Danton bellowed, and then found his tongue for a moment. "Debby! Grab that carcass, in the stall behind you. Throw it out in the open somewhere. I've got a hunch." Then through him, Kroo spoke again. "Delay not. Kroo hungers for a burnt offering."

The Japanese soldiers were still hesi-

tant. One of them shrilled something and scuttered off at a rapid pace, leaving the other holding his gun uncomfortably. "Come down or be shot," he ordered finally. "You must stay in Myapur. It is an order."

"I'm not going anywhere," Danton argued frantically. "Captain Yakuni didn't say I had to stay on the ground, did he?"

"No, but—"

"I like it up here. The air's better. Debby, quick! Kroo's going to—*Lo! Fear Kroo's wrath! Make haste!*"

Deborah, quite white, seized the skinned body of a kid and flung it away from her, in the general direction of Danton. There was a crackle of lightning, a crash from the thundercloud, and the kid vanished, leaving behind it an odor of roasted meat.

"I am pleased," Danton shouted. "You have acknowledged the greatness of Kroo. Come now to his temple to worship. Follow my priest."

With that, the yak, bearing Danton, was levitated gently to the ground. The cloud disappeared. Danton, sweating profusely, clambered off his steed and almost fell into Deborah's arms.

"He—he's gone. I can tell. Debby, I'm not crazy! I wasn't hypnotized. You saw?"

"Y-yes. I saw what happened. This is awful. What are we going to do?"

"You will please come with me," a cold voice requested. Danton looked across a sea of brown, salaaming backs at the Japanese officer who stood waiting, a file of soldiers behind him.

"All right," Danton said weakly. "I suppose we'd better, Debby."

"But—didn't Kroo tell you to come to his temple? Do you suppose he meant the powerhouse?"

"I guess so. But how the blazes can I do that? See?" Danton jerked his head toward the soldiers.

DEBORAH did not answer. She was still remarkably pale. Shivering a little she lit a cheroot and blew smoke through her nostrils.

"Come!"

Danton obeyed the officer. Deborah at his side, he was marched through Myapur toward the temple that housed Captain Yakuni. Behind the file followed a horde of natives, gabbling among themselves, and determined to follow Kroo's priest despite the frequent orders of the Japanese that they disperse. They did not but they stayed at a respectful and safe distance.

YAKUNI did not rise from behind his improvised desk. His smile was obviously insincere.

"May I ask an explanation, Dr. Danton?" he suggested. "You need not be seated."

"Look, it wasn't his fault," Deborah told Yakuni.

"Silence, please, Miss Hadley. Now, Doctor. In our previous conversation you mentioned hypnotism. And you say you have been in Tibet. I advise you not to try to impress the Burmese natives with trickery. They are unarmed, and you cannot foment a revolt."

"I wasn't," Danton said. "I couldn't help what happened."

"Then you must be restrained, for your own protection. We need no *fakirs* in Myapur. I hesitate to have you shot. Imprisonment would be more effective. I am not satisfied with the story you have told me. Once again, Dr. Danton, how did you reach Myapur?"

"I flew. Or I thought I did. Captain—"

Yakuni held up his hand. "From what base did you fly?"

"Tibet. Near the Ghora Pass."

"Why did you come to Myapur? Why the powerhouse?"

"Delay not the priest of Kroo," Danton roared abruptly.

Yakuni jerked back with a startled gasp. The soldiers moved their rifles into position.

Deborah made a hopeless, inarticulate noise and gripped Danton's arm.

"Dan, be careful," she gasped. "Don't take off again. They'll shoot you sure this time."

"Ho," Danton bellowed at the astounded Yakuni. "Bow down and wor-

ship Kroo. He shall protect his chosen. Their nation will prosper above all others. Obey!"

"Dr. Danton," the Captain said carefully, rising. "I must ask you to modulate your voice. I must also request an apology. As an officer and representative of my country, I cannot allow this insult to pass."

"Waste not words," Danton roared. "Your allegiance henceforth is to Kroo. He shall make you mighty."

"Don't mind him," Deborah whispered faintly. "He's really crazy. You mustn't have him shot, Captain Yakuni. He doesn't know what he's saying."

The officer slowly unholstered a pistol. "I have said that I am willing to accept an apology. I am a civilized man, Miss Hadley, but I am also a servant of the Son of Heaven."

"A false god," Danton broke in tactlessly. "He shall be overthrown by Kroo's might. Never dare to refer to your petty god again in Myapur, henceforth the holy sanctum of Kroo. On your knees, dog!"

Yakuni's eyes widened.

"You die!" he said in a shocked voice, lifting his gun.

Danton, quite helpless now in the grip of the god, went green as he heard his voice, harsh and sonorous, break into a string of incredibly vile oaths. The language was Japanese, but the genesis of the profanity was without time or race.

It went back to the days of the dolmens, when shaggy brutes first learn to grunt monosyllabic oaths, and it drew color from unknown ages of barbarism. Kroo was not a civilized god. His curses, therefore, were the curses of soldiers and peasants.

Danton was thankful that Deborah could not understand Japanese.

But Yakuni and his soldiers could. For the first time Danton saw a Japanese officer lose his studied impassivity. He was quite nonplussed.

Just as Yakuni, frothing with rage, pulled the trigger of his gun, Danton and Deborah vanished. For once Kroo had shown sound judgment.

CHAPTER VI

Kroo Muscles in

IN THE wink of an eye Deborah Hadley and Danton had been transported from the Burmese temple to the powerhouse. The girl gazed about her at the huge dynamos and transformers in a dazed fashion and blinked her eyes.

"Whizzing prayer-wheels!" she exclaimed. "How'd we get here?"

"Kroo," Danton muttered. "He did it. See? He's brought the yak, too."

That was unmistakable. A yak looks singularly out of place in a powerhouse, but, on the other hand, the beast would seem out of place anywhere, except perhaps the Cretan Labyrinth. Aside from Kroo's sacred animal and the two whites, the powerhouse was empty.

"Behold the house of Kroo," Danton went on in a suddenly changed voice. "The interlopers have been removed. Henceforward it is a sacred place. Only Kroo's priest may enter."

Deborah gulped. "I can take a hint."

"Debby! Don't go—nay! Since you are here, here you stay. You were the first to sacrifice to Kroo. In reward, you shall be Kroo's priestess."

"Not if it makes me talk that way," she said wanly. "Dan, how can I tell when it's you and not—not—this Kroo?"

"My voice is different," Danton told her. "When Kroo takes over, I roar. Look out. Here I go again . . . Prepare the temple and make ready the sacrifice! Kroo goes, but will return."

There was silence. The yak lumbered forward a few steps, staring glumly at the concrete floor. Distantly came the sound of faint shouts.

Danton relaxed. "Okay. He's gone. I—I can feel it. Whew!"

"Second the motion. Jumping jeepers, Dan, what sort of devil have you got yourself tied up with?"

"He's not a devil. He's a god. Tibetan or something. What he's up to now only Heaven knows—I don't."

"Well, we'd better start thinking fast,"

Deborah said practically. "When Yakuni finds us here, it'll be blackout and quick curtain. This powerhouse is sacred, all right, but not to Kroo."

"Wonder what happened to the men?" Danton brooded. "Kroo said he'd—removed them."

"Don't ask me. But you'll notice I'm not stepping on any of these piles of cinders scattered around. What's that?"

It was a whole cow, its throat cut, sprawled unpleasantly atop one of the silent dynamos. Danton hesitated.

"Sacrifice, I suppose. Kroo thinks that's an altar."

"Maybe it is to him, but to Yakuni it's the *Ka'aba*. Do you realize, Dan, that men have been working since yesterday afternoon to repair one of these dynamos? Something went wrong and production on the bombs had to stop until it was fixed. Yakuni's been threatening to shoot everybody unless they worked triple-fast."

Danton went over and tried out the dead switches. "They don't work, anyhow. I can't repair 'em. I'm no technician."

"Yakuni's got technicians, and he's got a firing-squad, too."

Danton's shrug expressed hopelessness. "So what can we do? Take to the jungle?"

"I wonder if Kroo hasn't done us a favor. If we can wreck these dynamos proper—"

"Uh-huh! I'd forgotten about that. What we need is a bomb. See any?"

Deborah grimaced. "They don't keep the bombs here, sap. Those dynamos are valuable. There's a sledge-hammer. Try that. I'll see what I can find."

Danton hefted the heavy hammer. "Maybe. Well, here's where I commit suicide, after Yakuni catches up with me." He swung mightily.

The weapon was ripped from his hands in a blaze of coruscating flame and sent sailing through the air to smash heavily against the yak, which grunted in a surprised way. Palms singed and tingling, Danton slid down to the floor, gasping for breath and choking inarticulately, conscious that Kroo was trying to make

use of his tongue. Without sufficient breath that was impractical. The yak spoke.

"Traitorous priest, would you break the altar of Kroo?"

"I—ugh—uh—"

"False priest and priestess! Prepare to die!"

Deborah hurried forward. She dropped beside the half-stunned Danton and faced the yak.

"Kroo! Wait a minute. You're all wrong. That was just part of the ceremony. We weren't trying to smash your altar."

"Lie not," the yak warned. "Kroo knows all."

"Then—uh—then Kroo knows that in this land altars are made of metal, so they'll ring when they're struck. Like temple gongs. It's always done."

"That's right," Danton seconded weakly. "We were just starting the ceremony."

"Oh. Well. You have sinned through ignorance, not wilfully. But remember in future that Kroo's altars must be treated with due reverence. Only my priest and priestess may approach them, and they must never be touched by human hands."

"We won't," Deborah murmured. "We'll remember, I mean."

"That is well. And if you should forget—should I find that you have broken my law, then you shall know the wrath of Kroo. Nay, you cannot touch my altars. I lay that *geas* upon you both. It is forbidden you to do sacrilege in this manner, either wilfully or by chance. I have spoken."

Danton managed to nod. "What do you want us to do?"

"You are Kroo's mouthpiece. My people approach the temple. None may enter, but you shall stand at the doors and accept their offerings. Tell them Kroo has decreed a holiday. There will be a festival. They must hold games in my honor, as in the ancient days, and all must praise the name of Kroo. Later, I shall show my people how to live. The men must hunt, and women till the soil. The strongest must be chieftain. That way is best."

"Look," Danton said desperately, "I'm willing to go out and tell the Japs what you want, but they won't listen. They'll just shoot me."

"They will listen," the yak promised. "Kroo can protect his priest."

"Here they come," Deborah whispered.

"Feel okay, Dan?"

"Candidly, I feel terrible. Stay inside. Duck behind a dynamo where bullets won't reach you."

"I'm going with you."

"You're going to do what I say. Jump."

Deborah hesitated and then went toward a dynamo. A foot away she stopped, turning a white face back toward Danton.

"I can't. I can't get any closer to it."

"My *geas* is strong," the yak remarked.

It was. Danton realized that he and Deborah had been forbidden to lay hands on any of the dynamos, and Kroo's powers were by no means weak. He made an urgent gesture.

"You don't have to touch it. Circle around behind it—that's right. Now—"

Danton walked toward the doors, with an outward confidence he did not feel inwardly. The doors burst open at his approach, revealing a mob of Japanese soldiery outside, waiting, apparently, for Captain Yakuni, who was pushing his way through the group.

Yakuni saw Danton and flung up his arm. "Shoot that man," he commanded.

Half a hundred hands moved—and were frozen in sudden stasis. The Japanese turned into statues. Kroo's power held them motionless. Several men fell over with dull thumps.

Danton hesitated. A dozen feet away Captain Yakuni stood, trembling a little as he tried to move. The only perceptible result was a slight quivering of his whole body.

"Uh—I've got something to say. There's no use trying to shoot me—you're—I mean—" Danton stuck helplessly. Kroo, growing impatient, came to his rescue. The booming voice of the god spoke through Danton's lips.

"You come empty handed, and that does not please me. Yet you have come to worship, and for that reason Kroo for-

gives you all. Hearken now—forsake your weak gods and remember only that Kroo rules Myapur, as he shall some day rule all the world. This is Kroo's temple. None may enter under pain of death. Hearken again. This day is holy to Kroo. Feast and make merry and sacrifice. Drink mightily and fight mightily. The smell of *kumiss* is as pleasant as the odor of new-spilled blood."

There was a pause. Kroo resumed.

"And break not my law," he roared.

"I shall watch, and my lightning will destroy those who show not their gladness at my rule. Go now and obey."

Movement shook the ranks. A Burmese in the outer fringes cried out shrilly.

"Ai! He is a *nat*!"

"I am greater than any demon," Kroo thundered. "Draw *kris* and *da-knife*. Grow drunk with rejoicing."

Natives were straggling through the *champac* trees, few by few. Curiosity and fear brought them. They had heard Danton's words as they hid among the undergrowth.

"Form ranks," Captain Yakuni ordered brusquely. "Quick." As the soldiers obeyed, he led them toward Danton, but only a few steps. Once again paralysis seized the Japanese.

"Dogs," yelled Danton. "Would you enter Kroo's sacred house? Stand where you are, till I give you word." The white man's hand lifted, pointing to a little knot of Burmese. "There is laughter on your faces. That is well. Rejoice."

The natives instantly sobered, with wary glances at the Japanese. Kroo roared at them.

"Dance! Praise Kroo!"

They danced, unwillingly enough, continually watching Yakuni and his paralyzed cohorts. As it became evident that the Japanese were apparently conquered, the merriment became less strained. Other Burmese trickled out of the forest and joined in the capering.

Danton nodded benignantly. "You do well. Yet *kumiss* is needed. Feast and drink in Kroo's honor."

One of the natives mustered up enough courage. "There is but little to eat or

drink, *sawbwa*," he cried. "The conquerors have taken it all."

"*Ya!*" said Danton, waving his arm, and instantly there appeared a huge pile of edibles on the ground near by, like the overflow from the horn of plenty. There were bottles, too, Danton, staring at the seals and marks on the stuff, realized that Kroo had raided the stores in the Myapur Japanese commissariat. One look at Yakuni confirmed that supposition. The officer was a bright scarlet with impotent rage.

CHAPTER VII

Doubting Japs

THE Burmans, half-starved wretches, did not hesitate long. They flung themselves upon the booty with shrieks of glee. In a minute Kroo had all the celebration he could possibly demand. The natives gorged, glutted, guzzled, and babbled praise to Kroo. Tomorrow they might die, but in the meantime, they ate, drank, and were exceptionally merry.

"Now," said Kroo, via Danton, "hearken and obey."

The spell of immobility that held the Japanese was broken. Captain Yakuni, pistol in hand, hesitated. His men were looking to him for their cue. Danton could almost follow the thoughts passing through the officer's mind.

At last Yakuni muttered a few syllables to the soldiers nearest him. The latter formed into a compact file and marched straight toward the powerhouse doors. Their intention was obvious.

Before Danton could dodge back out of sight, a black thundercloud sprang into view above his head. Lightning forked from it.

The half-dozen Japanese soldiers were obliterated, to the sound of a thunder-clap. The fused metal of their guns dropped amid a scattering of fine ashes.

"Dance," Danton roared. "Obey or die."

Yakuni's lips twitched. "Dr. Danton," he said suddenly. "I must ask you to halt this—this—nonsense."

"Silence. Speak not to my priest without reverence."

The cloud muttered ominously. Yakuni's eyes narrowed. He snapped a quick command, and, in response, the Japanese joined the Burmese natives in their revelry. Puzzled glances were cast at the officer, but the instinct of obedience was too strong for doubt. Too strong, at present.

The Burmese had a tendency to shy away from the Japs. There was a noticeable lack of *camaraderie*. Nevertheless, the pagan ceremony of adoration proceeded to Kroo's satisfaction. Even Yakuni found a bottle and drank from it. If he refrained from dancing, that fact apparently went unnoticed by Kroo, who was slightly intoxicated by the size of his group of devotees.

Deborah's voice came from behind Danton. "Dan, what goes? Can I come out now?"

"Stay where you are," he advised her over his shoulder. "I'll let you know." For Danton was conscious of a false note that the uncivilized, uneducated Kroo did not detect. He knew quite well that Yakuni had not given up. The Japanese mind didn't work that way.

He was right. A number of the Japanese soldiers, in their solemn caperings—for none, unlike the Burmese, laughed—had drawn closer to the powerhouse steps. Without warning they closed in on Danton. The precision of the attack was rather admirable. Two of them seized his arms, a third pointed his side-arms at Danton's head, the thundercloud bellowed, and the ethnologist was yanked vertically into the air, a bullet clipping his shoe-heel. Again there was the flare of lightning.

The three soldiers were abruptly cremated.

Kroo lost his temper. The thundercloud expanded tremendously. A drenching rain blasted down on natives and Japs alike, the theatrical effect considerably increased by an incessant barrage of thunder and lightning. A soldier broke for the shelter of the trees, and was destroyed.

Yakuni was jerked upward as though

lassoed. He sailed in a breathtaking arc toward Danton, coming to rest a few feet below the American. The thunder still rolled deafeningly, and Kroo's attempts to speak through Danton's human lips were drowned.

Both Danton and Yakuni were drawn up, until the cloud was small below them, a black, sparkling stain that lay like spilled ink on a tiny relief map.

"Now," Kroo said, through Danton to Captain Yakuni, "we can talk. I am displeased with you, yellow man. You are *sawbwa* here, I think. You would do well to obey me."

YAKUNI did not answer, nor did he look down. His face was frozen into impassivity.

"You will obey. Your men will obey. Else I shall blast them all to cinders, and rip you apart muscle by sinew. Is it understood?"

Yakuni was silent. Abruptly Kroo revolved the officer on his axis at such a speed that he was a mere blur to Danton's eyes.

"Is it understood?"

"Yes," Yakuni said, once more motionless. "I agree."

"Ya! Then go down to the village with your men and hold festival. Worship Kroo. Have trial by combat, so that blood may flow, and the strongest may be proved Old Man of Kroo's tribe."

"Yes."

"Fight with sharp stones, as is right, and with great clubs, and with tooth and nail. Kroo likes not these—er—guns that kill from a distance. A weak man may slay a strong with guns. Might is right, yellow *sawbwa*! I, Kroo, say that. I have no love for weakling civilizations. The strong should be served by the weak. Therefore find the strongest man in the village, and find him by combat."

"Yes."

"Then go."

At this moment Danton gave a gasp of consternation.

"Kroo—look! he cried and pointed downward.

Panic-stricken by the nerve-shaking events which had occurred, Deborah

Hadley had rushed out of the powerhouse, dodging toward a Burmese house for safety. She was promptly pursued by a Japanese soldier who, grinning nastily, had grasped her by the wrist and whirled her to the ground. Kroo rubbed his chin and looked perplexed until Danton nudged the god with an impatient elbow.

"She is your priestess, Great One," yelled Danton. "Don't you mean to protect her?"

"Aye, Kroo's priestess is sacred," nodded the god, coming to a decision. "Watch this. I'll show you how I can handle a lightning bolt. Furthermore the girl won't be harmed, either—see if she is. This will really be artistic. Just watch."

Kroo raised his hairy arm and launched forth a jet of white-hot flame toward the soldier. There was a tremendous roar. Gobs of smoke and earth jumped high into the air. When the smoke and dust cleared away, Deborah was sitting up, dazedly, upon the ground and the soldier had vanished. Then Kroo gently lifted her up, propelled her lightly to the powerhouse and left her there on the steps.

Kroo now moved his thundercloud downward, driving natives and Japanese before it, in the direction of the village. Yakuni slanted away in pursuit. Danton was drawn back to the powerhouse and left on the steps beside Deborah Hadley and the yak.

"I go to watch the games," he heard himself say. "Stay here, with my priestess, and guard Kroo's temple. I shall speak to my people through the sacred yak."

The yak was levitated past Danton and went sailing off above the treetops. There was silence, broken by the murmuring of little rills that were trickling down toward the river gorge. From that distance came faint shouts.

Danton sat down. His muscles felt weak as water.

"Debby," he called faintly. "You there?"

"Uh-huh." She came out to join him, her eyes widening. With a sympathetic, soft sound she dropped beside Danton, putting an arm around his shoulders.

"You look awful."

"I don't feel well," he acknowledged.

"Being a high priest is no joke."

"Yeah." Debby moistened her lips.

"Wish I could offer you a drink, but I can't. Have a cheroot."

"No, thanks. *Whew!*"

"Be glad you're not Yakuni," Deborah said.

"He's all right."

SHE looked doubtfully at Danton.

"Yeah? I saw part of what happened. Once a Jap has to knuckle under, he goes haywire."

"No, Yakuni's too intelligent. He'll know enough to play possum. He's not credulous, and he's the guy who'll use his brain. Right now Yakuni doesn't believe in Kroo. I'll bet a plugged *anna* that he thinks I'm a Yogi, and that I've been using mass hypnotism. My power's too strong for him to meet in open battle, so he'll try other methods. He'll pretend to play along, but there'll be plenty of Fifth Column work going on under cover."

"But the Japs can't use the dynamos," the girl objected. "Kroo won't let them."

"Exactly. But I don't know how long Kroo will be satisfied to keep things in *status quo*. I'm not a god. I can't think like a god, even a savage one. If Kroo should go away—and he might—we'd be in a spot. Yakuni would get the powerhouse back."

"You're borrowing trouble."

"Um. I'd like to sabotage the dynamos, just in case. We can't touch 'em, but one of Yakuni's bombs ought to do the trick."

"Sure—for the dynamos and for us, too, after Kroo heard the explosion."

"Not if we played innocent. I've a feeling I can talk Kroo into doing what I want. Or at least I can argue him out of killing us. He isn't omniscient. I've got a hunch."

"Okay. What's the hunch?"

"We get a bomb. We can't get close to a dynamo, but if a bomb goes off inside the powerhouse, that'll do the trick."

"I'll do it. There!"

Danton grinned. "Good kid. Come along."

As they slipped through the jungle down the slope, Deborah paused with a little gasp. "Dan. I just thought of something."

"What?"

"The obvious. Can't you guess?"

"You mean Yakuni's sending for help? Paratroops and bombers? I thought of that. We're safe, Debby. Yakuni doesn't want to call attention to Gyapur. Mass troop movements heading for here might tip off Allied air scouts. And of course he wouldn't want the powerhouse bombed. But there's a more important factor than that."

"What?"

"Loss of face. Can you imagine Yakuni wirelessly a message that Myapur had been captured by a hypnotist—an American girl and an American ethnologist? Nope. Yakuni's going to handle this business himself as long as he can."

There was no one on guard at the munition dump. Apparently Kroo had scoured Myapur in search of slackers. Danton monkeyed with the lock and finally forced it. Inside, he brooded over one of the bombs.

"Can you figure it out?" Deborah wanted to know.

"Guess so. Percussion—um. If these eggs are as powerful as you say, they'd be made to stand a lot of jouncing without going off. So—got it. Here." he showed her.

"Not now, for Pete's sake. Let's sneak back to the powerhouse."

"Okay. We'll need ropes."

CHAPTER VIII

Kroo's Protection

HOWEVER they could not carry the bomb into the powerhouse. On the threshold they were stopped cold, by some intangible force. They just could not enter the powerhouse with the bomb.

"Confound it," Danton exploded. "I didn't expect this."

Deborah was pale. "Is—is Kroo watching?"

"I'm pretty sure he isn't. It's a conditioned reflex. He forbade us to do sacrilege."

"He told us we couldn't touch the dynamos."

"The part symbolizes the all. Our subconscious is using induction. As long as we have the conscious desire to wreck Kroo's altars, we're physically incapable of it. Hang the luck!" He scowled. "If we really thought the bomb was harmless, we could probably carry it inside. But I'll bet we couldn't set it off."

Deborah thought hard. "If you could disguise the bomb as something else and tell me to take it in we might do the trick."

"Uh-huh. I wish you hadn't mentioned that. Now we'll both be on our guard."

"We could get a native to carry a bomb in."

"A Burmese wouldn't, because he's been forbidden to enter the powerhouse. A Jap wouldn't either, for different reasons. Wonder if we could rig up some sort of pulley and slide the bomb inside?"

Experiment proved all other expedients to be impossible, also. Kroo was a master of post-hypnotic suggestion. At last they hid the bomb in the jungle and glumly sat down to wait.

"Yakuni can win if he waits long enough," Danton theorized, scratching himself. "That yak's got fleas. From the talks I've had with Kroo, I figure he won't be satisfied with Myapur. He'll want to expand. Right now we're fairly safe, because Kroo's able to supervise Myapur. But after he spreads out. Well, as I said, he isn't omniscient. He won't be able to keep his eye on all his temples. Yakuni can move in here."

"Until Kroo makes a round of inspection."

"Uh-huh. By that time we'll have been shot. And Kroo may be capricious. He may get tired of this particular temple and let the Japs have it back. There's no inevitable syllogism."

"Half the time I understand what you're talking about," Deborah said. "But only half the time."

Danton was pondering. "Our best bet

is to sabotage the dynamos. We can't do that ourselves. Allied bombers can, if we can get word through. By radio. Let's try Yakuni's headquarters."

They did.

Captain Yakuni had foresightedly removed certain vital parts.

"Let me think." Danton rubbed his temples. "I've an idea that might work. But it'll take time. We can't spring psychology on Kroo too suddenly."

"Psychology?"

"Uh-huh. Kroo's got an inferiority complex. He wants to be a big shot. Now, what do we want?"

"You tell me."

"We want to get away from the Japs. Let's go back to the powerhouse. I want to work this out."

A few hours later the yak reappeared, garlanded with flowers, sailing in through the doors of Kroo's temple.

"Kroo salutes his priest and priestess," the beast remarked, coming to ground with a thump. "You have guarded the altars faithfully. Or have you?"

DANTON diplomatically salaamed. "We have. Great is Kroo."

"Great indeed. My people worship in the village. They have turned from their false gods."

"Poor Yakuni," Deborah muttered.

"He's doing all right," Danton told her in a swift aside. "Just waiting for his chance."

"What," the yak inquired, "do you mean?"

"Great is Kroo," Danton said hastily. "We've been talking—your priestess and I—about spreading your fame, Myapur's a pretty small place, after all."

"My name shall be known in all lands. But not right now."

"The life-cycle of gods follows a pattern," Kroo explained. "In all things this is so. Local storm-gods have become great. But there is always a beginning."

"All gods have disciples," Danton said. "Right?"

"True enough."

"Well, why can't we be your disciples? Let us go forth into the world and tell the people about you. Advertising pays."

As the yak did not speak, Danton went on hurriedly. "Why not transport us to some big city—in Australia or even America—where we could really go to town?"

"Australia and America have their own gods, I am sure," Kroo countered shrewdly. "I must wait till I am more powerful before I expand. Burma will do for a beginning. If I should overreach myself, that might spell my doom. Other gods are jealous. Nay, high priest of Kroo, you shall remain here and, under me, rule Myapur."

"Just like that," Deborah said. "Mind if I burn some incense, Kroo?" She lit a cheroot rather shakily.

Danton pulled at his chin.

"Kroo. Great Kroo, may I speak quite frankly?"

"Temper your words with prudence."

"Well, it's this way. Suppose a priest of Kroo got killed by mortal weapons. Wouldn't that be unfortunate?"

"Unfortunate for the assassins," the yak rumbled. "They would die."

"Still, that would be bad for your prestige. I represent you in human form. Isn't that true?"

"I suppose so. Yes, that is true."

"Then if I were killed the people's faith in Kroo's omnipotence might be shaken."

"Who dares lift a spear against you? Point him out and he shall be slain."

"The whole village, and you can't slay everybody, or you'd be without worshippers. You know you've favored me specially. Isn't it natural for the rest to be jealous?"

"It is human." For the moment, Kroo overlooked his own obvious frailties.

"There it is," Danton nodded. "You said the life-cycles of gods are parallel. What about invulnerability?"

"You mean Balder? But he was a god."

"Achilles, then. He was human, but invulnerable, through the favor of his gods. They put the stamp of approval on him. Can't you make your priestess and me invulnerable, to prove your power?"

"Very well," Kroo said. "It is done."

Kroo had spoken.

DEBORAH gulped. "Just like that?" "Yes. Only Balder was slain by the mistletoe, and Achilles was wounded in the heel. I must not vary from the pattern. There must be a chink in the armor. You two are safe from harm as long as you remain in Kroo's temple."

"Now wait a minute," Danton said hurriedly. "Are you sure that's what you want? If you should be called away from Myapur on business, wouldn't you like us to keep things running, stamping out blasphemy and that sort of thing?"

"You speak sooth," the yak nodded. "I see your point. You would not dare leave the temple, and my people might turn to false gods in my absence. Um, that's true."

"Why not make us invulnerable all the time?"

"Apollo's son suffered through pride," Kroo remarked cryptically. "Here is my edict. So long as you remain near my sacred yak, nothing can harm you. Now I return to my festival. Yâ!"

"Don't take the yak," Deborah cried desperately. She was just in time. The beast described a graceful loop in midair and returned to its starting point.

"I need no human or earthly vessel to watch my worshippers," the yak said.

A thundercloud appeared, crackled faintly, and swept out of the powerhouse.

Kroo was gone.

CHAPTER IX

False Priest

COMPLETE establishment of Kroo's rule over Myapur was aided by the god's close supervision. He was an apparently all-seeing monitor against whose laws it was not safe to transgress. Kroo was invisible. The thundercloud did not always herald his presence. The erring were severely punished, usually by death. And Captain Yakuni did not wish his forces decimated.

The Japanese officer's equanimity was not greatly troubled, except by the

obvious drawbacks of the situation. For, as Danton had suspected, Yakuni did not for a moment believe in Kroo. On the contrary, he attributed the affair to mass hypnotism. His cremated men, he decided, had not been struck by deific lightning, since lightning could not be controlled except in well-equipped laboratories. Rather, Danton had simply shot or stabbed the offending soldiers and hypnotized everybody into seeing a more impressive theatrical scene.

It was quite remarkable hypnotism. But Yakuni preferred to believe in that explanation rather than admit Kroo's existence. As a matter of fact, he could not believe in Kroo. He was not conditioned that way.

So Myapur was reorganized by mud and blood. The men hunted. No slacking was allowed. Nor were guns permitted. The yak spoke firmly on that point, mincing no words about cowardice. Kroo wanted his people to be courageous, perhaps through some obscure compensation-motive of his own. The Burmese were used to hand-weapons. They hunted tigers happily, hurling their spears with well-trained accuracy. The Japanese were less pleased.

The guns of the Japanese had all been collected by the natives and levitated into the powerhouse by Kroo.

But a few guns had not been discovered so there were occasional shots fired at Danton and Deborah. Since the latter pair never ventured far from the yak, they remained unharmed. And Kroo always took vengeance on the assassins, when he could find the right ones.

In a week another shipment of bombs would come down-river to Captain Yakuni, for the electrolytic treatment. The jig would be up then, and the Japanese Empire would know that an American hypnotist had captured Myapur and subjected the conquerors to indignities. Yakuni had no intention of waiting so long. His sharpshooters had failed to murder the Americans, true. But there were other methods.

Only Yakuni could not think of any.

Before the week ended, Kroo relaxed with a grunt of contentment. His people.

Not a lot of lying, cowardly beings who gave him hypocritical lip-service, such as he had been accustomed to for so long. Kroo was pleased with the tribe, the Burmese especially.

No other god was so great. No other god had such a temple, or such giant altars. Well, not many, Kroo hoped.

He let himself dream. In the future—after many centuries, of course—Kroo might be as great as Moloch or red Ormazd, called the Flame. Yet that was too much to hope.

No, by the Greater than Gods, it was not! Even Ormazd had been a little god once. So had Osiris and Babylonian Al-latu. And Marduk as well. Now they dwelt in Godsheim, where no weakling god could enter.

BUT if Kroo became great, and a warrior, and the lord of many races and temples—why, then the gates of Godsheim might some day open to him. He could wait. And in the meantime there would be temporal pleasures, and a tribe to rule and guide—one tribe now, a nation in the days to come.

Kroo the Warrior! How did that sound? It sounded fine—if he could only make it come true!

Kroo looked down at the powerhouse. A kid lay on one of his altars. The priestess was smoking her incense. Her prayer to Kroo!

Kroo slid down the airways, entering the yak. He fumbled an instant before possessing the awkward throat muscles of the beast.

"Kroo hears. Kroo accepts your sacrifice."

Danton, looking rather haggard, glanced at Deborah and nodded imperceptibly.

"Great is Kroo. Have I your permission to speak?"

"You are dear to me, priest. Speak. Have I not given you the power of invulnerability?"

"Yeah," Danton said grimly. "It's come in blamed handy, too. But what I wanted to say—I've got an idea. You have to follow the life-patterns of the other gods, don't you?"

"I follow no other gods. All gods follow the great matrix."

"Well, that's what I mean," said Danton. "It seems to me you've skipped something, Kroo. The Solar myth. All the great gods have been killed and have risen. Horus of Egypt, Balder, Quetzl-coatl—the Irish, the American Indian—all races. Didn't the Druids have a god named Mider who was reborn? At the spring equinox?"

"The vernal equinox. Aye. And at each eclipse. Priest, you are wise. Yet I do not know whether I am ready."

"Why not? There's no time like the present."

"You are clever at pronouncing oracles, priest. It is a good saying. I have been remiss. Excellent, I shall die and be reborn. It will not take long—a lunar cycle—a month."

"Good. Then what's the program?"

Kroo explained. It was an interesting ceremony. For thirty days Kroo agreed to hibernate. This period would usher in for his worshippers a time of mourning and abstinence from all pleasures, till the god should wake from this catalepsy.

"Yes," said the yak gloatingly. "Great is Kroo!"

Danton glanced significantly at Deborah.

"Well," she said, "I guess I'll go see how those floating temples are getting along."

"Good," said the credulous god. "It was a clever idea." He fell to discussing details of the ceremony with Danton, while Deborah slipped out and headed for the village.

It had been Danton's thought, a few days before, to create floating platforms on which Kroo could be worshipped. He had easily convinced the god of his apparent motives—the symbolic statement that Kroo was lord of the river as well as of the land. And the platforms were almost ready. One in particular had been made especially sturdy, at Danton's order, buoyed by sealed petrol cans and equipped with a serviceable rudder. It was, in fact, built to carry a yak.

And that would be necessary, if Danton and Deborah were to escape alive.

The presence of the yak provided their invulnerability. Nothing could harm them in their journey down river to the nearest Allied base. And, with Kroo hibernating, no safeguards they could take would be too many.

Everything went off without a hitch. The plan worked almost too satisfactorily. Danton could not help worrying a trifle. Kroo was unsuspicious as the ceremonial rite proceeded, and Captain Yakuni made no attempt to cause trouble. The ritual began at dawn, and lasted about two hours, culminating as usual in a drunken orgy.

All in all, the ceremony was a success. The thundercloud hovering overhead shrank and vanished, and Danton knew that Kroo was gone.

The god was hibernating. Presently he would rise again. But there was a lot to be done before that occurred.

THEY headed for the river, Deborah astride the yak, Danton leading the beast. The natives followed in a capering procession. For all they knew, this was simply part of the ceremony. They did not even catch on when the yak was loaded aboard the floating platform and the Americans pushed off into mid-stream.

"I go to sacrifice to Kroo in a secret place," Danton announced to the crowd at the river-bank.

"Should I not return by tomorrow's sunrise, Myapur is a forbidden place. Find new homes and new villages. This is Kroo's order." Then he turned to Deborah. "This will save the townspeople, if Myapur should be bombed by airplanes."

The raft swept around a bend in the river. The last thing Danton saw was Captain Yakuni's face, puzzled, wary, thoughtful. There was no pursuit.

Danton examined the raft. Concealed under skins was a supply of food, as well as a gun or two and several *da*-knives which he had previously cached there.

"Now, grab that pole and fend us off from the bank if we swing too close," he told her. "This steering-rudder's hard as blazes to work. Lucky the river isn't

fast, or we might capsize. When we come to the rapids, lower down, we'll leave the raft, take the yak, and portage."

Deborah shivered.

"I'm just wondering," she murmured.

"Wondering what's going to happen to us when Kroo wakes up."

There was no pursuit from Yakuni as they drifted downstream. Crocs, lying like logs on the mud banks, watched the raft slide past on the brown, roiling flood. It was hot. The air was choking and stuffy, even on the river. The jungle walled them in with silence.

There was a pervading odor of rotten flowers. The wind did not cool even at sunset, when the sky turned green as Burmese jade. Deborah's cheroots were too soggy to smoke. The yak, used to a higher altitude, moaned and burred sadly, staring at the Americans with great, sad brown eyes.

Once they saw a plane, too far away for practical purposes, though Deborah thought it was an American P-40. And once an outburst of firing greeted them as they slid around a bend. The attackers kept hidden in the jungle, and their bullets did no harm.

The cobra struck at Danton and Deborah and their guardian beast. The carnivores trailed them. The crocodile charged them. Kroo's power was strong, though the god slept.

The raft floated on, until rapids blocked the river. After that they went afoot. The *da*-knives were useful then, to slash through tangled undergrowth and vines, and the yak could make an opening where none existed. But for the most part Danton followed a well-worn trail. There was nothing to fear except thirst and starvation. Even when a Japanese scouting party met them—that did not matter either.

But the journey took time. They went blindly south, following the river, for they did not know where they could find an Allied base. Often they saw planes. Twice Danton was prepared, and built a signal fire. The first time he was too late, and the ship was gone before its pilot saw the smoke. The second time Jap planes came and the dog-fight overhead

passed away to the west.

The yak thrived on an abundance of food, though his coat grew ragged and mangy in the heat. Deborah never complained, but after the first week she began to grow thin. So did Danton. It did not matter, for too much flesh is an invitation to fever.

RAGGED, exhausted, gaunt, they went on. One week. Two. Three. And longer. They had not yet found an Allied base.

Then Kroo awoke.

An animal after hibernation is starved and weak. This is not true of a god. When Kroo roused, his first conscious emotion was joyous expectation. His dreams had been pleasant, of Myapur and his people and his future, and Kroo stretched his muscular body and shouted with laughter. The dawn sun was pearly above the jungle mists. It was the day of awakening. Now Myapur should cease mourning for the sleeping god and rejoice. Kroo had risen, and there would be laughter in Myapur.

But there was silence in the village on the river-bank. No smoke rose from the huts. There was no life.

"Ya!" cried Kroo as he rushed down the winds, "Wake! Wake, my people."

Already the jungle had encroached on Myapur. Jackals roamed the streets, and rank weeds grew between the stones. The temple? The temple had been violated.

The altars of Kroo were gone.

Fallen was Myapur, as Babylon had fallen, as though a curse had blighted it. Blankly Kroo looked upon the wreckage.

He stood motionless, towering above Myapur. A kite dipped, crying shrilly. The river sent up muffled thunder.

"Ai—and ai! My people! My faithless priest and priestess!"

The surprise faded from Kroo's face. His yellow tusks gleamed in the morning sunlight. Muffled thunder snarled.

"My great and shining altars! Ah-h—"

Lightning flickered. The sky was suddenly overcast.

Roaring, Kroo plunged southward. The gale paced him. Drumming of the

thunder warned of his approach. The jungle bowed before the coming of Kroo.

He saw his quarry at last. There was no need to search blindly, for the intangible rapport between god and priest, between god and sacred animal, drew him unerringly. Kroo saw his quarry and reached down.

CHAPTER X

Warrior's Reward

A GREAT rush of air wakened Danton. He gasped for breath, struggled, tried to sit up, and caught a sickening glimpse of the jungle dropping away below. Rising with him were Deborah and the yak.

"Dan," the girl reached out frantically, and Danton drew her close, white-faced. "Dan! It—it's Kroo!"

"Yeah. I know."

Half a mile above the earth they stopped. The yak shook its shaggy head. Kroo's voice came from the beast-throat.

"It is Kroo. You have broken faith with your god. Myapur lies empty, my temple desecrated and gutted. My altars are gone. My people are scattered. Faithless guardians—die!"

Danton's stomach lurched sickeningly. "Wait," he gasped. "Kroo, listen. Give us a chance."

"I have listened too long. You die."

Deborah spoke suddenly. "Kroo, we couldn't help it. The Japs broke into the temple and drove us away."

"You could have halted them."

"We tried. You were gone. They—they—"

"Why did you flee? You are invulnerable."

"We were trying to get help," Deborah said weakly, and folded up, unable to say any more. But she had given Danton a breathing-space. Now he took up the tale.

"What she says is true. We were driven out. The Burmese tried to help us, but the Japs were too strong. We were

going to get help to recapture your altars."

"My altars. My great and shining altars, such as no other gods ever possessed. Where are they?"

Danton glanced at Deborah. "Yakuni dismantled the powerhouse. He knew we might get through to the Allies, and then Myapur would be bombed. He's probably set up the dynamos somewhere else."

"Where?" the yak roared. "Find my altars, priest, or you perish."

Danton gulped. "Well, I'll try. Can you take us back to Myapur?"

"Aye." This time Kroo did not travel slowly. Instantly he transported his prisoners to the Burmese village. "Lo! Look down and see the ruin of my temple."

"Blame the Japs for that," Danton said, licking his lips.

"Find my altars."

"I'll do my best. Can we—uh—fly down the river, about sixty miles per hour?"

Kroo made no answer, but Danton, Deborah and the yak began to move downstream, high in the air.

"Uh, a little less altitude would help. Thanks."

Deborah's lips were trembling. "Wish I was some place else. How are we going to do this?"

Danton squeezed her hand. "Buck up. I haven't an instruments, but I can guess where Yakuni went."

"Where?"

"Down the river. He had to transport the dynamos. Even dismantled they're plenty heavy, so he must have used rafts. Obviously he didn't go upstream."

"But we can't search the whole river, Dan."

"We won't have to. Dynamos convert energy. Yakuni needs water-power. He'll set up the dynamos near a fall. Remember, he's had more than a month to do the job."

"But—even a month—"

"You know how the Japs work. Yakuni had trained engineers in his gang. The Tokyo machine's efficient. Maybe the new powerhouse isn't quite finished yet,

but Yakuni's certainly working on it. It'll be camouflaged, of course. He wouldn't move the dynamos out of Myapur to avoid our bombers without planning to hide 'em carefully. Keep your eyes open."

BUT it was Kroo, in the end, who found their goal. As Danton had expected, it was near a falls, and concealed cement channels supplied the necessary pressure.

The group swooped down. For an instant leaves lashed their faces. Then they were in the impromptu powerhouse Yakuni had constructed. It was a rough job, but expert technicians had worked

Suddenly Danton saw the way. He flashed Deborah a warning glance.

"The yellow-skinned men are faithless, Kroo. He drove away your faithful Burmese and cursed Myapur. He said—he said you were a weakling and would run away and hide when you woke."

"Dan," Deborah whispered.

"Do I speak the truth, priestess?" Danton glared at the girl.

"Y-yes. That's what happened."

"My altars!" groaned Kroo.

"Kroo." Danton's face was deathly pale. "Drive out this evil god. You're powerful. Fight him. Destroy him."

"Fight him?"

"He does evil. He makes the death

*"You're Not Human Any More. Not
Since You Walked into the Cloud—"*

HE WANTED TO keep right on being Steve Vance, of Beverly Hills, California—but now he had no name, no identity, and was being shunted between the Eighth and Ninth Dimensions! There was no turning back, as the beautiful Shirina had warned him in *VEIL OF ATELLAR*, an astonishing novelet of solar peril by Leigh Brackett!

COMING NEXT ISSUE!



on it, laboring night and day under Yakuni's threats, and Kroo's altars had been installed.

More than that, they were in operation. The turbines roared with chained energy converted from the water-pressure of the river. Yes, Yakuni had worked fast.

One glimpse Danton had, and that was all. Gasping for breath, he found himself on the opposite bank above the falls. Deborah and the yak beside him. There was silence. Kroo said nothing.

"He's done it," Deborah gulped. "Tojo's making those devilish bombs again."

Before Danton could reply, the yak spoke.

"Priest, what is this? What thing dwells in my altars? What has happened to them?"

that slays your people. Are you—afraid?"

"Wait," the yak said. "Remain here. Watch."

"You'll—fight the other god?"

"Wait," Kroo said, "and watch."

Kroo looked down on the dynamos. They throbbed with life. Their roar mounted to a monotonous threnody. Around them the yellow men scurried, serving and worshipping. Worshipping the new god, who had cursed Myapur.

"I am afraid," Kroo said to himself. "A-j, I'm afraid."

Suddenly he hated the new god.

The smell of incense rose to his nostrils. Danton was smoking Deborah's last cheroot, soggy as it was. And Danton was praying.

"Avenge your people, Kroo. Drive out the usurper. Challenge him to battle.

Great is Kroo."

One worshiper, where there had been many. Only one—no, two, for Deborah was praying too. Kroo's yellow tusks gleamed. From his height he stared down at the powerhouse.

And then, softly at first, he began to curse. To human ears it sounded like the wind, a deep, throbbing gale. Kroo cursed the new god. He challenged the new god.

"Kroo is great, Kroo is greater than any usurper. You have stolen my altars. Will you fight to keep them? Will you fight? Will you battle Kroo? Ya—for I am a great god and I shall crush you."

The booming gusts crashed down from the cloudy sky. Within the powerhouse Yakuni looked up, puzzled. A storm?

ABRUPTLY he glanced at the dynamos. Was it his imagination, or was their tone changing? Were they actually roaring as though in harmony with the shouting wind—as though in answer?

As though the wind bellowed challenge! And the turbines replied!

The gale mounted to a crescendo. It became almost articulate. And the dynamos—

Yakuni's eyes widened. He swung around to the power switches, but his motion was never completed.

Down the winds came Kroo. Invisible, mighty, terrible, Kroo lowered his shaggy head and charged to do battle with the god of the dynamos.

The explosion rocked the jungle!

Above the falls, Danton picked himself up, blood trickling from ears and nostrils. He helped Deborah to her feet. Behind them the yak struggled up, grunting and moaning. It collapsed suddenly, to lie motionless, its mountainous bulk inert.

Deborah was crying.

"He's dead, Dan, Kroo, I mean. We—"

"How do you think I feel?" Danton asked hoarsely. "Sending that—that tremendous savage off to commit suicide. . . . But it was the only way out."

"I suppose so."

"Of course it was," Danton said, rub-

bing his forehead. "I—I didn't quite expect this, I thought either Kroo would destroy the dynamos, or be destroyed himself. This way is better. Yakuni and his men are dead, and the dynamos are scrap metal."

"The yak's dead, too."

"He died when Kroo died. Debby, are you sure about Kroo? That he—isn't here any more?"

She nodded slowly. "I'm sure, Dan. I can feel he's gone. Can't you?"

"Yes, I can feel it, too. He was a Neanderthaler at heart, but I hated to play such a trick on him." Danton managed to shrug, though the gesture was abortive.

The girl looked up at the clouds. "Dan, is that a plane?"

A speck grew in the western sky.

"It is," Danton said after a while. "One of ours, too. Must have seen the explosion. No wonder, either." He stripped off his shirt and began to wave it.

The plane dipped its wings in acknowledgement. It began to circle down, looking for a landing place.

Danton picked up his discarded cheroot and relighted it, with a glance at the sky. Deborah smiled at him shakily, understanding the gesture.

"The plane's landed," Danton said. "Let's go, Debby."

He flicked the cheroot into the river, and the fires died forever upon Kroo's altar.

* * * * *

The fog was thick. It clung dankly, choking in its chill moisture, but as Kroo rode onward upon the yak he saw that it was drifting apart into rags and tatters. And now four tall figures were visible through the mist, guarding a bridge. Beyond them an arched span led into infinity. Silently the giants waited.

Bull-thewed and terrible they stood. They greeted Kroo with strange, formal gestures of welcome.

They gave their names.

Marduk and Ormazd the Flame—Osiris and Allatu of Babylon, Ormazd shook his red head and grinned at Kroo.

"We greet you, Kroo the Warrior."

But Kroo could not speak, for a little while.

"This could not be Godsheim," he said. "I am a little god—"

"This is the bridge to Godsheim," Marduk told him. "Dead gods pass this way, if they are not weaklings. There is a place for you."

Kroo's hairy hands went out in a gesture of disbelief. "Ormazd! Tall Osiris—Marduk and Allatu! But I am not great

—I might have been, in a thousand years, but I died too soon."

"You fell in battle," Osiris said. "You challenged the mightiest entity in all the universes. None of us has dared to meet such an opponent as slew you. *Hai*—you are one of us, brother. Come!"

Marduk and Ormazd flanked him. Allatu went before. Osiris followed.

And Kroo the Warrior rode across the bridge to Godsheim.



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Carter fired his ray-gun into the fanged red mouth of the apparition

VENUSIAN NIGHTMARE

By FORD SMITH

*Miriam Montez Embogs Ríval Telecasters in the Legendary
Secret of the Miasmíc, Unexplored Venusian Great Sink!*

ACROSS the flat and rubbery expanse of slimy-looking soil the three men carefully and steadily slogged their way. They dared not halt, even for a minute, because immediately they would start sinking into the semi-viscous stuff, in reality only a slightly harder crust over a sea of gelatinous ooze.

At first there had been a bit of panic on the part of Morton and Doville. But Carter had quickly straightened them out and started them moving in the right direction.

For four hours now, they had been struggling onward but it meant death to stop and rest.

As far as they could see there was

nothing save the wettish, broad-leafed plants with their sickly green fuzz and abominable odor of rot and decay. Nothing but fetid odors lifted above the dreary, miasmíc level of the Venusian Great Sink.

Overhead, occasionally glimpsed through the sullenly roiling clouds that constantly veiled the heavens, was the yellowish disk of the sun—considerably larger than as seen from Earth and yet shining dimly like a fog light through a heavy mist.

The heat was terrific—a cloying, stifling blanket that sapped the very strength of their heartbeats.

Carter, the Interplanetary Police Officer, glanced at his electronic wrist

compass-watch for the hundredth time to make sure of his direction. Hatless and haggard, his blond hair glowed queerly in the eerie light. His face was grim, his blue eyes, bleak.

He had a triple duty now—to get his two companions safely out of this acute danger and then investigate the cause of their inexplicable disaster. This, on top of his original mission.

"According to the map," he panted, "it is only about ten miles farther across this trackless bog to Crowder's mine. It will be that low-lying hill over there on the horizon. We've got to make it before nightfall."

"Night couldn't fall on this crazy spot," gasped Morton, whipping off the perspiration running from his brown-thatched scalp down across his usually pleasant face. "It would only bog down in this garbage-pail atmosphere and get sucked under this soupy soil crust. How'd we ever get into this mess, anyway?"

"Don't you remember?" murmured Doville in faint irony. The third man was slender and wiry, with a shock of vigorous black hair. "We asked for this assignment. Solarcast's two star newscast men volunteered to cover the iratrum ore strike and the Crowder Process, and then telecast the news to the entire System—if the I-P censors will release it from the tight beam."

MORTON grimaced with annoyance. "I didn't mean that," he grunted, trudging wearily along in the I-P officer's wake and avoiding Carter's tracks which were quickly filling in with slimy ooze and blackish water. "Here we are in the middle of nowhere without supplies to keep us alive, much less a single scrap of transmission equipment. We should have stayed with the ship and continued sending out flash signals for help from Venus City."

"And sunk into this bottomless morass along with the craft," added Carter curtly over his shoulder. "We'd have been buried alive in less than an hour. It's tough on you chaps, but it's lucky we weren't forced down sooner. We have

an excellent chance of getting out of this difficulty by hiking on toward our destination on foot. You can telecast your story after we get back to Venus City."

"Without projection of actual scenes, personal interviews, and such," grumbled Morton. "Nice going. I wonder who could have left that fuel line open to strand us out here."

"The only person I can think of is that Amazon from Univox," commented Doville reflectively. "She got all excited last night when she learned we were here on Venus to cover the Crowder story. I could read her like a simple astrologation. She's here on the same assignment for Univox Service."

"Miriam Montez is not an Amazon," objected Morton instantly. "Just because she couldn't see your angular and craggy style of beauty in my dazzling presence you needn't malign her now. And suppose she did try to strand us so she could beat us to Crowder for the news? Haven't we pulled such—"

"If our fuel tanks were drained purposely," interrupted Carter grimly, "it was not done just to strand us. Had we landed closer to the middle of this hellish bog we would have had no chance at all of getting out alive."

"Could it have been a Crowder agent, then?" mused Morton.

"Why would Crowder want to kill the publicity we could give him?" demanded Doville. "This is the greatest iratrum strike anywhere in the System since the Lunar mines started playing out. Coupled with a revolutionizing method of extracting metallic iratex simply and quickly without going through the Bundersohn Process, it will make Amos Crowder the most famous man of the colonized worlds."

"If all this is on the level," added Carter. "The important thing right now is for us to get to the Crowder mine as soon as possible. Lucky there are no dangerous carnivores in this area. All I have in the way of a weapon is a hand ray-gun which won't even stun a man beyond twenty paces. Your two primitive hunting knives are more of an advantage under the present circumstances."

"Why are there no dangerous animals?" asked Doville.

"There couldn't be out here on the Great Sink. Anything of weight or substance would sink to death the minute it stopped moving. All animal life of Venus avoids this graveyard which is like a huge sea of quicksand."

"You know a lot about Venus, don't you, Carter?" asked Morton curiously. "Just what is this Great Sink?"

"I should," replied the I-P man. "I've spent most of my life here. But nobody knows anything about the Great Sink. Discovered in twenty-five eighty-seven by Theodore Voorhees, one of the early pioneers of Venus, the Great Sink comprises an area about one hundred miles wide and two hundred miles long. It consists of a soft, slimy gelatinous mass of sulphurous matter. Over its surface a thin soil of muddy, marshy consistency supports only a peculiar mulleinlike plant with some of the narcotic properties of *cannabis indica*.

"The bottom has never been sounded. Its formation or cause of formation is only theorized upon by scientists. The native Venusian legend is that this planet is a living entity and that the Great Sink is its eye. Whatever it is, no man from Earth or Venusian troglodyte has even traversed or explored it—and lived to tell the tale. If we make it to solid ground we will be unique."

Morton shuddered slightly. "I hope you don't believe that native stuff."

"Frankly, no. But Venus is a fetid, steamy, lusty green planet that has had less than ten percent of its surface explored. There is no telling what terrible mysteries are hidden by the teeming jungles, seas and dense clouds.

"Approximately the same geologic age as the Earth and Mars, it has cooled much slower than Earth. As Mars has aged faster than Earth, so Earth has aged faster than Venus. Some day, when I retire from the I-P, I intend to explore on Venus."

THEY toiled on, forcing their tiring muscles to respond. Once Doville stepped into an extra soft spot and sank

to his waist before Carter and Morton could drag him clear. It was a narrow escape from the odious, bubbling, sucking morass.

They were trembling and spent as they neared the low hummock of hills which marked the beginning of solid ground. Further conversation languished as they hastened toward salvation.

In spite of their calm and matter-of-fact of facing things, their present plight was terribly dangerous, and they all three knew it. If their legs gave out, if they stooped to rest, or if night were to overtake them, they were lost.

Without food or water for more than eight hours, spent and well-nigh exhausted; they neared the rising ground ahead of them just as the queer daylight deepened into murky gloom. To their ears now came the steady *thump-thump* of some sort of drilling machinery, and the soft ground quivered beneath their feet from the rhythmic vibration.

They could make out several dome-shaped low buildings before them and a dump of ore deposits which had been taken from the ground. There was a magnetic tippie and a steep trestle beyond. But not a living soul was apparent around the mining camp.

"Look!" exclaimed Morton suddenly, pointing. "What's that in the cleared space?"

"A rocket ship!" cried Doville and Carter together.

"Probably Crowder's," added Carter. "Come on, and walk alertly. I may not have told you exactly why I was sent with you, but the truth is that the natives are restless and there is danger of an uprising. My job is to find out why."

They approached the rocket ship and felt of its sleek iratex side.

"This isn't Crowder's ship," announced Carter. "It has the insignia of a sun, star and crescent above its serial number. Isn't that the Univox emblem?"

"Miriam Montez!" cried Doville. "So that wench beat us here!"

"But where is she now?" demanded Morton anxiously. "Where is anybody?"

"Come on," ordered Carter, drawing

his ray-gun and leading the way to the central dome. "This building must cover the main mine shaft."

They encountered neither friend nor foe as they entered the dome. They found the circular room lighted by krypton bulbs overhead, and discovered the source of the machinery noise at the same time.

This was the powerhouse of the camp, and the huge dynamo was whirring smoothly. The *thump-thump* sound seemed to be coming up from the elevator shaft. The cage was at the top, deserted and silent.

A trampled white garment lay on the floor of the lift. Morton uttered a cry and sprang forward to snatch it up. It proved to be a woman's bolero style jacket.

"Miriam's!" cried Morton. "Gods of space! What can have happened here?"

"There's plenty wrong," stated Carter grimly. "The Veenies seem to have deserted the camp. Come on, we'll go down."

The two telecast men glanced at each other and then with one accord followed the I-P man into the cage. Carter gingerly set the mechanism in motion, and the lift smoothly descended the mine shaft—into what?

For nearly five hundred feet the cage went down. Just as they were wondering if the descent were to last forever, the automatic relay clicked, and the lift came to rest on the bottom. A krypton-lighted corridor cut out of the living rock led off to their right. The drilling *thump-thump*, louder than ever, was coming from this stope.

"Wait!" ordered Carter as Morton started precipitously along the corridor. "If my directions are not confused, that heads straight toward the Great Sink. A hundred yards, and it must plunge through the rock into that slimy sea of ooze."

"If it did, this tunnel would be flooded," argued Morton. "I'm going to see what happened to Miriam."

"Take it easy," cautioned Carter. "Let's stay together."

Slowly and cautiously they advanced

for nearly three hundred feet in a straight direction. The thumping grew louder constantly. All at once the tunnel widened into a cavern hewn out of the rock. Sparkling threads of iratrum ore glittered in the walls.

At the far end of the chamber a gigantic drill was working away automatically in a horizontal bore against the wall. All around was the litter and rubble of unremoved ore.

BUT what riveted their eyes before all else was the sight of Miriam Montez scantily attired in the rest of her white plastex suit. Bound with rope to a short stone column, the girl, her lovely black hair streaming down over her shoulders, stared out at them in dazed horror.

At her feet lay the body of Amos Crowder and the geologist-scientist wasn't a pretty thing to look at. His head had been beaten into a pulp.

"The Veenies have revolted," said Carter quickly. "But where in the name of spaceimps have they gone?"

"Jack Morton! Carl Doville!" screamed the girl, arousing at sight of the three men. "Thank God, you've come."

The two Solarcast men leaped forward to release the Univox representative. Carter peered sharply around the cavern, seeing nothing suspicious. Then he moved forward to examine the monument to which the girl was tied.

"A Venusian obelisk," he observed in amazement. "Now, how did that get down here?"

"The native miners revolted," explained the girl hysterically. "They left me here as some sort of sacrifice to the Eye. They killed Doctor Crowder, and they fled."

"How long have you been here?" asked Morton, sawing away at her bonds.

"For hours," the girl sobbed. "The attack came without warning. The natives killed all of Crowder's assistants and then brought him and me down here. I don't understand the Venusian dialects very well, but they seemed to be babbling something about invading the socket of

the Great Eye in this pursuit of iratrum ore."

Doville attacked the bonds on his side. He looked up rather sourly at the captive Univox newswoman. "So you didn't have time to telecast the Crowder story, huh?"

"I didn't even have a chance to set up my equipment," admitted the girl.

"Maybe Crowder stalled you along, too, eh?" pursued Doville. "He was expecting Morton and me from Solarcast—not a treacherous female from Univox."

"Not now, Doville," snapped Morton. "Let's get her out of this mess first."

"The devil with not now," growled Doville. "Look at me, Montez! I'm covered with slime from the waist down. I darn near lost my life in that quagmire out there. She botched our fuel line, didn't she? We barely escaped the Great Sink."

"Oh, I'm sorry," cried the girl. "I didn't know it was that dangerous. I just wanted to get here first. I only meant to delay you men."

"You almost overdid yourself, young woman," stated Carter grimly. "People who don't know conditions on strange planets should not meddle with matters. If I had met you last night myself, I could have told you what you were up against. This is no job and no place for a woman, anyway."

"I resent that," said the girl with a flash of spirit. "Men and women take equal responsibilities and risks in our present civilization."

"And share all the dangers," added Carter. "Well, we've got to get out of here and flash the alarm to Venus City about this uprising. We can settle our personal differences later. I've got to shut off this confounded drill somehow."

Doville reeled back on his knees with a strangled cry. "Look!" he shouted. "The end wall is caving!"

So it was. With a rumbling roar the entire end of the cavern where the drill was grinding away now came crashing down to bury the tool. Like a blast, a foul odor as of rotting fish swept into the chamber, just ahead of a tide of

greenish mud and slime.

Then, before the semi-liquid filth could inundate the cavern, it was stopped as by an obstruction. A crescendo of hissing filled the cave, as though a dozen steam jets were venting.

AND then, through the gaping hole which had pierced to the Great Sink five hundred feet below the surface, there was framed what appeared to be a terrible face. Glowing greenly in the krypton lights, crowned with writhing tentacles which terminated in the fanged jaws of serpents, the face glared into the cave.

"Medusa!" whispered Doville in revulsion. "A Venusian Medusa!"

Morton, mercifully, did not see it. Neither did the girl. Morton severed the last rope which bound her to the obelisk and gathered Miriam up in his arms.

His face grim and set with horror, Carter crouched behind him and raised his ray-gun. He fired an electron stream of deadly energy pointblank at the fanged red mouth of the apparition.

"Run for the elevator!" he shouted. "If we don't get out of here at once we never will."

The two Solarcast men staggered back toward the lift. Carter retreated more slowly, continuing to fire his ray-gun. The sibilant hissing of the Great Sink horror rose in greater volume, and a queer muffled screaming issued from the mouth of the thing.

One taloned flipper, revoltingly suggestive of a human hand, clawed frantically at the edge of the orifice, digging and gouging the hole larger. Save for a blinding and dazzling of the creature, the ray-gun had no more effect than a child's water-pistol.

Carter's last glimpse of the horror was to see his taloned flipper snake on into the cave with an influx of bubbling green slime. Then he was back at the lift, and Doville was operating the controls.

Madly, the elevator whined up the shaft, followed by a nauseating wave of sulphurous, fishy stench. Something struck the wall of the bottom of the shaft with a mighty thud that made the

lift quiver like a live thing. But fortunately the dynamo, the power feed and the cable drums were at the top of the shaft, and the cage was not stopped.

BY THE time they reached the surface, the three men had regained control of themselves.

"What—what was it?" faltered the girl.

"Too bad you missed it," replied Denville bluntly. "That was the thing you almost sent all three of us down to feed. It was a Venusian model of Medusa, a charming monster of ancient Greek mythology on Earth."

"Do you think it will follow us up the shaft?" Morton asked Carter.

"I don't know," admitted the I-P man. "Although I hardly think so. The top of the shaft is above the level of the Great Sink."

But they were not yet out of danger. The ground beneath them heaved and tumbled in convulsive waves as they staggered and reeled their way toward the Univox rocket ship. Buildings collapsed and crumbled around them. The ground cracked as though in the throes of an earthquake.

Shaken and bruised, they tumbled inside the craft, and Carter made his way to the control chamber. As he charged the rockets and blasted off from the

trembling ground, a thick geyser of green slime and mud shot upward from the elevator shaft and jetted high in the night sky as though in a final desperate reach for the escaping prey.

"Good-by to Crowder's mine and extraction process," said Denville, gazing back and down from a port viewplate. "Anyway, we learned the Great Sink isn't an eye. It's a slimy sea of horrible nightmares."

"Maybe everything isn't lost," said Miriam, reaching into her waist belt. "Crowder gave me his notes to scan just before we were captured by the natives. It's only right that I surrender them to you men for saving my life."

"What!" exclaimed Morton, grabbing the papers and riffling hurriedly through them. "By Jupiter, you're right, Montez. Warm up the telecast, Denville. We'll share this news between us. And this process, if it's good, will compensate the System for the loss of Crowder's ore strike. Miriam, you're a four-square comrade."

"Don't forget to give Carter full credit for what he has done," said the girl. "He killed the—the Medusa."

"He did not," contradicted Carter over his shoulder. "But don't worry about me. I'm going back to land that fish with the snaky head as soon as I can get the right equipment together."

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(Adv.)

THE INVISIBLE ARMY

By ROSS ROCKLYNNE

*A Microscope Slide, Glimpsed in a Laboratory,
Sends Phil Hardesty into Mortal Struggle Versus
the Deadliest Plot Against America Ever Conceived!*

CHAPTER I

A Damsel Disappears



WHEN they reached the skylight on the roof of the brownstone, the older men drew back. His companion, whose wide, sloping shoulders were silhouetted against the brilliant night haze that rose from across

the city where the Great White Way shone in all its post-war brilliance, peered at him through the darkness as if trying to read the cause of his hesitation in his features.

"We can't do it," said James Capet, trying to explain his withdrawal. "Fritz Maurer is too highly respected. He wouldn't kidnap Ileen. We'll just make fools of ourselves or worse if we break in without permission."

"Maurer is a Nazi," said Hardesty, the younger man.

"A lot of fine men worked for Germany during the war," said Capet quietly. "They had to. Maurer was quick enough to get over here when peace came."

"Sure he was," said Hardesty earnestly. "That's part of it. Just because he's a great scientist doesn't mean he's no Nazi. Besides, he's our only lead to Ileen."

There was a pause, while both men thought over the disturbing facts of Ileen

Capet's disappearance. Both of them loved her—James Capet was her father, Phil Hardesty the man who hoped to marry her. Ileen had thrown their engagement ring in his face when he'd objected to her applying for a job as Fritz Maurer's housekeeper.

Yet it had been Hardesty's suspicion of the emigre scientist that had caused her to take the job. Since coming to America, Maurer had been secretive about his work, announcing only that he was working on his greatest invention, something that would open new vistas for all humanity.

Hardesty, himself an inventor of promise, had taken this statement with a grain of salt. Maurer had heretofore put his talents solely to uses for the destruction, not the aid of humanity. His development of the rocket gun had been chiefly instrumental in enabling the tottering Axis to prolong the war.

More than once, Hardesty had permitted himself to muse on the possibility of the great scientist being involved in one of the most mysterious events of modern times. Shortly after the Armistice which followed World War Two, when the troops of the United Nations marched into Germany to supervise the disarmament of the citadel of *Festung Europa*, one million of the three million men in arms remaining to Nazi Germany had vanished into thin air.

OVER an after-dinner highball, Hardesty had propounded his theory to Capet and Ileen, and the girl had seized on it with enthusiasm. A beautiful, wil-

AN ASTONISHING COMPLETE NOVELET



Hardesty leaped straight up at the monster menacing Ileen

ful, active girl of the post-war type, she used up her energy and a great deal of her fiance's and wealthy, manufacturing father's patience by galloping off on frequently dangerous assignments for the *New York Globe*.

"I think you're off your rocker, Phil," she'd told Hardesty. "Those million men probably went home. And how you tie Maurer up with them anyway is beyond me. No one man could—but," and her eyes lighted up as she said it, "there's a great story in whatever he's doing. And I'm the girl who's going to get it."

The next day, she had obtained permission from her managing editor to tackle the assignment and applied for the housekeeper's position. The rest was silence. The police could do nothing without evidence. Fritz Maurer was a trusted scientist—an international figure. No, they had to do the job themselves.

"But I've got a reputation to consider," said Capet, still hesitating. "And I've got the welfare of those who work for me to think of."

"You've got a daughter to think of too," said Hardesty grimly. "You may call me a fool for working on my bomb-sight after peace—but an Armistice *isn't* peace. It cost us enough to find it out the last time. For my money, Fritz Maurer is still an enemy. I'm breaking in. Come along or not as you please."

He moved quickly to the skylight, bent over it for a brief moment of study, then went to work with a short iron lever. There was a sharp creak, then a rending noise, then he had the skylight open. The dark well of entry to the house, which they had reached by climbing over from an adjoining roof, lay open before them.

Hardesty led the way downstairs, from one apparently vacant and unlighted floor to the next, until at last the two invaders blinked as they entered a brilliantly lighted laboratory in the basement. Around the walls were shelves stacked with bottles and boxes of chemicals. Thick cables snaked their way across the cement from heavy generators and transformers which were hooked up to a squat tangle of condensers and de-

Forest tubes overhanging a platform.

"She's not here!" said James Capet hopelessly. His face was beaded with sweat.

Hardesty merely nodded curtly, moved toward a stained table crowded with retorts and pipettes. At one end was a high-powered microscope of the latest design. On impulse, he put one eye to it—and froze. When at length he straightened, it was with an involuntary cry.

"Quiet!" whispered Capet. Hardesty shook himself like a dog shaking water, nodded for the older man to take a look. He watched grimly as the manufacturer bent, then stiffened, then grabbed at the edge of the table.

"It's a gag!" said Capet. "It's—it's impossible!"

"Nothing," said a soft, mocking, faintly accented voice from the doorway behind the two startled men, "is impossible. Please remain as you are."

In spite of the warning, both men turned to find themselves looking into the business end of an automatic pistol. Holding it with steady hand was Doctor Fritz Maurer. His eyes were masked by dark glasses, but his lips wore an enigmatic smile.

"Greetings, Herr Capet," Maurer said amiably. "I've rather been expecting you. And this, I take it, is Philip Hardesty, the young inventor of whom your daughter spoke. I bid you both welcome. Miss Capet will be pleased to see you both, I'm sure."

Hardesty's stunned mind began to function, and he got a glimpse of the picture that confronted them. Involuntarily, he took a step toward the emigre scientist, recoiled as the gun centered on his heart.

"I have a perfect right to shoot," said Maurer. "You have broken into my home and into my laboratory. Stay where you are."

He lifted his left hand, which held a small glass ball, tossed the spheroid at their feet. A cloud of green vapor whirled up from the floor. With a strangled yell, Hardesty lunged for the scientist.

He didn't make it. The gas was too strong. But even as he clutched at his throat and fell forward, he had a final vivid memory of what he'd seen on the slide under the microscope—an encamped army, complete with infantry, light and heavy artillery, prime movers, lorries and armored units, all of them re-

hard ground of some peculiar substance that was without vegetation and had a peculiar formation of foot high hillocks—like a composition desert.

A strangely muted groan caused him to turn his head. James Capet was lying ten feet from him in one of the hollows between the hillocks. He was wearing



Phil Hardesty held his grip on Maurer as they both were tossed down into the realm of littleness

duced to a size that made the smallest toy soldiers look like titans.

WHEN he came to, he was on his hands and knees, apparently still trying to fight his way back to consciousness. He was crouched under a vast and brilliant sky that faded into a distance without horizons. He was on a

a rubberized coverall and transparent helmet, apparently air tight, breathing air from a tank attached to his chest. Hardesty found himself to be similarly clad.

The young man remained on his hands and knees, trying to gather his wits before rising to his feet. He examined his garment. It lacked the tensile

strength required for a diver's equipment. Then, with a shock, he remembered the miniature soldiers he had seen through the eye-piece of the microscope. They too had been wearing coveralls and transparent helmets!

He shook himself again, then got to his feet. It had to be faced. He helped Capet to his feet. The older men rocked a bit unsteadily, stared at Hardesty through his helmet as if he were seeing a ghost.

"You're all right," said the inventor, even though he knew it was a lie.

At that moment, both men staggered under the impact of a furious gust of wind. They fell over a hillock, picked themselves up, were knocked down again by another gust from the opposite direction. Again it came, and again.

"Some wind," gasped Hardesty, bewildered. He and Capet were like a pair of reeling sots, steady for a few seconds, then staggering wildly.

"What is it?" gasped Ileen's father, stumbling again over a hillock. He steadied, then rocked again before the mysterious forces. A wind, born of nothing, was buffeting them without directional sense, but at regular intervals.

Hardesty began to get the hang of it then. There was a moment, before it struck, when he could feel it gathering force. By leaning against its current, he found himself able to remain erect. Capet mastered the trick after a fashion, then sat down hard. His face was haggard behind his transparent helmet.

"You saw what I saw in the slide?" he asked. By some sonic valve device, Hardesty could hear him clearly. "An army, an actual army in miniature?"

Hardesty nodded. As if motivated by the same impulse, both men looked upward at the "sky." Both realized then what had happened, the inconceivable fate that Fritz Maurer had meted out to them. They looked at each other, speechless. And then there was no chance for words.

It was Hardesty, leaning now this way, now that against the buffettings of that insane wind, who saw the "boulder" first. A jagged black mass, perhaps

eighty feet in width was plummeting through the air directly toward them. Not until it was almost upon them did he realize their danger.

"Duck!" he yelled and threw himself flat in a furrow. Beside him, Capet did likewise. The "boulder" struck the ground a few feet beyond them with a thunderous concussion, bounded high in the air and was soon lost to sight. The young man choked back a hysterical laugh, saw Capet peering at him over a hillock.

"A dust particle?" the older man whispered.

"A dust particle bigger than we!" said the inventor, fighting for self control. "That proves it," he went on. "Maurer has somehow—and don't ask me how—reduced us to microscopic proportions. You might say we are mere fragments of our former selves."

The joke fell flat as they got the full force and flavor of their predicament.

CHAPTER II

Laboratory Specimens

SLOWLY James Capet nodded his head.

"At that, you'd be overstating it," he said finally. He looked as if he were about to be sick. But both he and Hardesty were saved from further introspective gloom by the shrill scream which sounded not far away.

Hardesty leaped to his feet. He recognized that voice.

"Ileen!" he cried and, without waiting for Capet, went bounding toward the source of the sound, which had made his blood run cold. He topped a gentle rise in the undulating surface, skidded to a stop at what he saw.

It was Ileen all right, but she was in danger so terrible that he had to fight an overwhelming impulse to flee. She was writhing helplessly in the air, some forty feet above the ground, her slim body wrapped around and again around by a thick and fearsome tentacle—a tentacle

that belonged to an amoebic mass of protoplasm that made even Hardesty's science-hardened senses crawl. It was a bacterium so huge that it seemed to blot out the sky.

At that moment, the young inventor's brain did not follow its usual logical course. If it had, he'd have known he could not hope to rescue the girl. But Ileen was the girl he loved, and his emotions ran away with him. Without counting the cost, he leaped straight up at the monster, rising more than forty feet in the air.

Even as he soared to the attack, a fragment of his scientific mind functioned to tell him how such a leap was possible. In the first place, reduced as he was in size, the pull of gravity on his body was proportionately less. And secondly, thanks to this same reduction of the earth's pull, his muscles, which had not lessened in the same ratio, had many times their normal strength.

He gripped the tentacle which held the girl and hung on, his natural squeamishness forgotten in the heat of conflict. Twenty feet from him the coiling arm merged with a bloated, shapeless body.

The one-celled trypanosome quivered with awareness of this new prey. It could not keep its limited consciousness fixed on two things at once. So it dropped the girl unceremoniously, curled inward like a spring and whipped into an attack at Hardesty, wrapping him tight in its coils.

His legs kicked helplessly at the air as his gauntleted hands pushed and tugged at the slimy coils in an effort to extricate himself. He felt the air being squeezed from his lungs, wondered how long his ribs could withstand the pressure. Far below he caught a glimpse of Capet helping Ileen to her feet while both of them stared up at him in horror.

Their voices were barely audible, for within that microscopic world, thanks to the relative thinness of the air, sound did not travel far. He felt his eyes bulge, knew he was about to be drawn into that horrible pulpy body. His struggles grew weaker as lights burst in his brain. Then his vision began to

fade, and he welcomed the blackness that was descending upon him.

Delivery came from an unexpected source. As if in a dream, he heard a distant *rat-tat-tat-tat-tat*. The flagella whipped him violently about, then flung him high in the air as it uncoiled. He floated down, still half unconscious, and the jar of his landing was enough to put him out.

He woke up screaming—snapped out of it when he saw Ileen's pert face, now gray with anxiety, bent over his. Her brown eyes were wide with worry.

"Phil!" she cried. "Phil! You're all right!"

"I'm all right," he said, feeling life return to him. "And so are you, thank God!"

"That," she replied enigmatically, "is a moot question. Look around."

Capet was standing beside his daughter, his face a mixture of emotions. Hardesty got up slowly, knowing what he would probably see. He remembered the odd sound like a riveting machine that had accompanied his deliverance from the bacterium.

He was not surprised to see that they were surrounded by soldiers. They wore coveralls like himself, but were also equipped with automatic rifles, sub-machine-guns and cartridge belts through which, in many cases, ugly rows of potato masher grenades were thrust.

BEYOND the men was a great park of equipment. Hardesty noted anti-tank artillery, dual-purpose 88's, ugly looking tanks and troop and weapon carriers.

"I was wrong," said Capet, coloring under his heavy stare. "I guess I knew it when I looked through the microscope—but it didn't seem possible."

"Don't do an I-told-you-so on me, Phil," the girl said to Hardesty as they got to their feet. "I thought you were crazy, too—and remember?" She told them her story briefly—how she'd gotten the housekeeping job all right, but had been unable to get out of the batter's box on getting a story.

"Maurer wouldn't fall for it," she said.

"I guess I wasn't very skillful at pumping him. He finally brought me to the basement and had me look in the slide. I thought I was out of my mind. Then he told me a General von Streiber would enjoy my company more than he and—but I don't have to tell you the rest. I woke up here and wandered around alone until the germ got me."

"That," said Hardesty with a touch of grim humor, "was quite the toughest germ I ever met." He looked around again at the soldiers and equipment. "Well, we seem to have found the missing army — more important, they've managed to get it on American soil."

"And that," said a deep voice from behind him, "is the final and most important step in *blitzkrieg* warfare."

Hardesty turned quickly. He knew without asking that this was General von Streiber. Beneath his transparent helmet, the man was a perfect apotheosis of the thin-lipped, cold-eyed, square-headed Prussian military type. The general stood at ease, his feet planted wide apart, undressing Ileen coolly with his stare. She colored under his gaze, moved closer to the inventor.

"Beauty," he said pompously, "should never be chary of her charms. Young lady, I must remember to compliment Herr Maurer on the ravishing guest he has sent me. These eternal maneuvers against germs keep the men hard and fit, but they grow wearisome in time."

"However," he turned to Hardesty and Capet, "the time is running out. Soon now, that you have demobilized your army, it will be our turn to sweep through your cities in the renaissance of German culture."

"Stab in the back tactics?" said Hardesty.

"And why not?" said the general. "Would you walk up to a lion in the jungle face to face. We made the peace to throw you off guard. Well, you are off guard. We Germans were never beaten."

"Spare us your creed," said Capet cynically. "Tell us this—how did Maurer manage to get a whole army on a microscope slide?"

The general, briefly amiable in anticipation of his great triumph to come, could and did explain. Scientists working on a theorem of Dr. Maurer had discovered an electro-magnetic vibration which compressed atomic electrons closer to their nuclei without damaging the dynamic stability of the whole. Such vibrations could shrink any object to one forty-three-thousandth of its original size.

Special suits had been designed for the men selected, suits which would compress the rarified atmosphere to breathability. Vast stores of food and equipment were reduced along with the men, thus enabling them to subsist indefinitely. From this account, Hardesty realized that Maurer undoubtedly kept a few spare suits in his laboratory to permit German agents to be reduced to communication purposes.

"This great discovery," the general concluded, "was not ready until the unfeeling attacks of the United Nations Air Forces had forced Germany to sue for an armistice. But the plan was carried through, none the less, and Doctor Maurer brought the slides to this country with him."

"There are other slides?" Hardesty asked, paling at the thought.

"But naturally," said von Streiber without modesty. "I have but one division here—perhaps twelve thousand men. The rest of my army numbers forty divisions. With corps and army troops and the Luftwaffe forces under my command, it totals eight slides—almost a million men."

"How are you going to operate bombers from a brownstone house?" asked Hardesty.

THE general looked at the American as if he were a mere school boy.

"You speak foolishly," he said. "When the time comes, a picked regiment will be restored to its original size. They will seize this section of the city—and there will be little opposition. Then the machinery will be set up in the street and a full division released with its armored equipment."

"It will not take long to occupy a part of Manhattan and cross the river to La Guardia Field—perhaps a couple of hours at most. Then"—he all but rubbed his hands at the prospect—"will come the planes. Special laboratories have been built in some of them so that they can land anywhere in the country and send forth more divisions until the nation is conquered."

"On the same day, at the very same hour," he continued, his pale eyes gleaming, "we will send armies into Philadelphia, Washington, Pittsburgh, Detroit and Chicago—yes, and Kansas City, Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles if need be. Gentlemen, there can be no effective defense against such tactics!"

CHAPTER III

Visit from a Titan

AFTER von Streiber had finished his speech, Hardesty glanced at Capet. Under his helmet, the manufacturer's face was streaming with perspiration. At the sight, the inventor realized that he too was sweating. There was no need to ask the other's thoughts. Both men were well aware that resistance to such fiendish ingenuity would be disrupted and smashed even before it could form.

"In the meantime," said Hardesty. "What are you going to do with us?"

The Junker general, leaning easily into that never ending variable wind, dropped his mask of geniality as if it were a cloak. His eyes narrowed as he considered his captives.

"You are prisoners of the Reich," he said. "You will be shot if you attempt to escape." He turned to the white-faced girl, a sudden gleam in his eyes. "You, Fraulein Capet, need not worry. These measure do not apply to you as long as you remain dutiful, obedient and remain in your proper sphere."

He gave a quick order, and the soldiers around them snapped smartly to attention. Von Streiber turned on his heel and walked away. Ileen looked after

him with troubled eyes.

"I'm scared," she said. "Phil, we've got to get out of here."

"You're telling me," said Phil, looking grimly at Capet.

"The question confronting us is how?" said Capet. He glanced around them at their grim military escort. "I don't think we can make it."

The question stayed with them throughout the next few hours. Hardesty wrestled with it vainly, fearing every moment for Ileen. During that time, he became acquainted with the miraculous efficiency of the equipment he wore. Eating, for instance, was a simple matter in this world of the infinitely small.

Levers attached to a sort of girdle around the coverall could be hand operated from outside so that they dipped into jars containing a variety of dehydrated foods. There was a drinking tube, and the water canteen could be replenished from pressure tanks standing in handy spots.

Special sanitary stations, in which the coveralls could be removed with safety thanks to air conditioning devices had been set up throughout the camp at strategic spots. The indefinite existence of the army in this miniature world had been prepared for with typical German thoroughness.

There was, of course, no night in the orthodox sense. The soldiers slept when off duty in their tents. When they had been there almost twenty-four hours, Hardesty and Ileen asked for and obtained permission from the officer of the guard to go along on a microbe hunting unit.

For the better part of an hour they scoured the uneven terrain in a scout car, looking for prey. Finally, they spotted a typhoid germ about to alight, and the soldiers opened up with their machine-guns. Bullets ate through the germ's armor plate. Protoplasm oozed through the holes, but the armor repaired itself miraculously. The germ met death only when the hail of steel-jacketed slugs amputated its flagella. Direct hits on its monstrous body were mere pin pricks.

It was unbelievable, the world of the

infinitely small. Dust particles the size of buildings hurtled through the sky. Pieces of lint whirled past, immense, dangerously whipping cables. It was a dangerous world to the untutored, with mountainous motes and monsters of all descriptions—and many that defied description.

Ileen hugged Hardesty's side as they rode back toward the camp. She was quiet, her eyes shadowed with fear.

"I don't want to go back," she said softly.

"We haven't a chance," said Hardesty, glancing at the grim faces of the armed men that rode with them.

"I'd almost rather be shot than know that that—Streiber is waiting for me," she said, her voice unsteady. "Sooner or later. . . ."

"If he tries anything—" said the inventor, then laughed bitterly. "A fine protector I am. I could do nothing."

THEY reached the camp then and stopped. Capet was there, waiting for them. There was something in his eyes that spoke no good. Worse, beside him were a half dozen soldiers of the general's personal guard.

"Something is up!" he muttered, then stopped as a corporal spoke.

"His Excellency the General von Streiber requests the presence of Miss Capet's company at his headquarters," he said harshly. At his command, the squad lined up on either side of the girl. Hardesty lunged forward—and almost spitted himself on the corporal's bayonet.

"You can't do anything, Phil," said the girl. Capet stepped forward and dragged Hardesty back. They stood rigidly while she was marched away, her head held proudly. Then, as if he had been dealt a physical blow, Hardesty sank to the ground and buried his face in his hands.

"They took her," he whispered brokenly. The older man put an arm around him, spoke gently but with deep emotion.

"We can't help her, Phil," he said. "I, her father, tell you this. We must remember that we have a greater duty now—a duty to humanity. The future of

America and the civilized world depends upon our remaining alert and ready to act when we get an opportunity. If we die, so does the world."

Hardesty nodded, then ceased to listen. He stared over Capet's shoulder at something beyond. Suddenly, he leaped to his feet.

"Maurer!" he cried.

But his cry was only one of many as the soldiers around him looked up, pointed and called the scientist's name. Others came running as the somnolent army camp grew alive with excitement.

The two Americans stood shoulder to shoulder, staring at the descending giant while the crowd milled around them. The scientist was still tremendous, a mile high, his legs monoliths solidly implanted on the slide. But he was growing smaller even as he approached.

"It's Maurer all right," said Capet tensely. "He's wearing some kind of portable reduction machine—a belt. Von Streiber's marching orders must have come at last."

Hardesty paled at the thought. He looked around quickly. The entire division was cheering the scientist as he dwindled to their size. For the moment, the attention of no one was focused on the prisoners. For the moment, Hardesty was free to act. Just what, he wondered, could he do.

As he watched the scientist's approach, a wild, crazy scheme formed in his mind. It was so wild and crazy that it might—which was all he was waiting for, a chance, Maurer was now a mere five hundred feet tall and two hundred yards away. Hardesty tapped Capet's shoulder.

"Don't be surprised at anything I do," he whispered. "Stand by."

Capet stared at him, puzzled, then shook his head.

"Go to it, son, if you've got anything. Good luck!"

All motion seemed suspended while Maurer became one hundred feet tall, then fifty—until finally and less than fifty feet away, he was "normal." At that moment, Hardesty acted.

As if impelled from an arquebus, the

young inventor streaked for the diabolical scientist. So fast did he move that no soldier had time to bring a weapon to bear against him. Maurer saw him coming. His eyes dilated, and he stepped backward, but he could do no more than scream a warning.

Then Hardesty was upon him, tangling with him, bearing him to the ground. Before Maurer realized his opponent's intentions, the young scientist's hand had closed around the size-control instrument on his belt, had pushed it all the way down.

For one brief moment, he wondered if the reducing field would carry him along with Maurer. Perhaps it was so constructed that only its wearer was affected by it.

And then his question was abruptly answered. With terrible swiftness, a giant range of mountains grew around the two struggling figures, grew higher and higher with each passing second. A terrible wind began to lash at them, but Hardesty maintained his grip on Maurer. Like a tumbleweed, they rolled over a changing surface as they fought.

CHAPTER IV

To Infinity and Back

THE Nazi scientist was bellowing wildly at the top of his voice.

"You fool, you'll kill us both!" Maurer screamed. He became a wild man, cursing Hardesty in German as he fought to free himself. For a moment, he wrenched clear, got a hand on the all-important lever. But the young inventor hadn't won through this far to be defeated. With a savage tackle, he re-joined the battle.

The mountains towered up in incredibly until they seemed to meet overhead. The battlers fell over the brink of a yawning precipice, but bounded and rolled their way down with increasing lack of gravity to land unharmed at its base. The air was filled with tiny dust particles that vibrated madly, darting

from side to side and up and down in a frenzy of motion. They struck at Hardesty's helmet, and he felt his senses swim.

The mountains and precipices continued to grow appallingly. And as they shrank further toward the infinitely small, so grew the wind. But from a wind it became a bombardment—a bombardment which shook the struggling men like the tines of a tuning fork.

Hardesty felt his senses swim. With terrible awareness, he realized the peril. In another few seconds, it would be too late. No living thing could stand the stresses to which he and Maurer were now subjected. He made a final frantic effort to wrench the belt free—and succeeded.

He saw rather than heard Maurer scream, his thick grey hair cascading about his distorted features as he clawed desperately to regain his means of escape. Both men were still shrinking as the reducing field contracted their electrons toward their atomic cores.

With growing horror, Hardesty fastened on the belt, fearing that he wouldn't make it. Maurer, drawing on the energy of final desperation, was charging him repeatedly, and those charges had to be met and repelled. With one hand, the young inventor clipped the belt into place, swung the other at Maurer, to send him tumbling into a newly opened ravine.

Then, with the last of his strength, Hardesty pulled the lever up.

The next few minutes were a dimly remembered nightmare. Dizziness washed over him like a tidal wave. The incredible vista of gorges, ravines, mountains and boulders shrank to half their size—and half again. For one flickering instant he saw a tiny Maurer scrambling desperately toward him up the side of a cliff. Then that too was gone.

A gorge all but closed over him as he grew. With a yell he just managed to pull himself over its lip in time. Then a mountain seemed bent on trapping his growing feet. He leaped high and far, landing on the side of a greater

mountain that, in turn, shrank under his boots. He fought his way desperately from one trap to another.

But wild relief was surging through his veins. He had won! The wind still thrust at him, but it was again merely a wind, not the atom bombardment to which he had been subjected moments before, the bombardment which was probably smashing Maurer to a pulp. He was approaching the proportions which he had come to think of as "normal."

Then the mountains were gone, and he was towering over a bumpy plain littered with dust blocks and germs and bacteria of every description. He was back—but he was already too big. He checked the lever, pressed it down. Below was spread von Streiber's panzer division. He grinned, but the grin faded as something struck violently against the side of the helmet.

A German 88 was blazing away at him. It smoked again, and the shell, with a small but savage concussion, burst in front of his eyes. In a flurry of panic, he stabilized his size and, in the face of rapidly increasing machine-gun, rifle and cannon fire bent over to check the murderous bombardment.

He endured it only as long as it took him to place a gauntleted thumb on cannon after cannon, upsetting them as if they were toys. He brushed a whole row of machine-guns aside, scattered men like ants in an ant hill. Soon the whole division was in flight, scurrying madly away, like Lilliputians before a destroying Gulliver.

ONE man alone stood his ground. Hardesty scooped him up, smiling. It was Ileen's father. Then he looked around for Ileen, bending over the terrified German soldiery. He saw von Streiber heading for shelter in an underground ammunition depot with bounding leaps that looked ridiculously short. He was carrying the girl slung over his shoulder. Ileen was beating vainly at his head.

Hardesty made a circle of his hand, dropped it over the fleeing general. At

bay, the German leader dropped the girl and tugged at his Luger in a frenzy of rage. He was, it seemed, a hard loser. The young inventor opened his hand, brushed the general away like an insect and picked up the girl with his other hand, and placed her near the spot where her father was waiting.

The battle was won.

THE trip back "up" proved easy. The outlines of the laboratory and the microscope grew rapidly about them, soon became distinct. When he was two inches tall, Hardesty went to the edge of the slide, there set his two precious charges down gently and decreased himself to their size. Talking fast and a bit incoherently in her excitement, Ileen flung herself into his arms.

"That's more like it," said the young inventor. "You get close too, Mr. Capet. Hang on tight." But even so, he asked the girl a question. "You changed your mind about me in a hurry, didn't you?"

"Everything's different now," she said. "We were both terribly wrong. The war is really over now. You don't have to work on the bombsight. You can take a job in dad's factory—can't he, dad?"

"Here we go," said Hardesty as he pulled the lever up. All three of them began to grow. After that, it was merely a matter of stepping from the slide and then jumping to the table, to a chair, finally to stand on the floor. When they were the size they had started from, Hardesty turned off the lever.

They took off their coveralls and helmets, and again the girl was in Hardesty's arms. He made her wait for his kiss while he extended a hand to her father.

"My apologies, Phil," the older man said. "You called the shots on this one. We'll turn over the slides and the story to the Secretary of War. He can do what he wants with them. But the credit is yours. I guess the publicity you'll get will net you more than a job in my factory would."

"I'll take the job," said Hardesty, smiling. He then turned his full attention

to Ileen long enough to keep her quiet.

"What happened to Maurer?" Capet asked a few moments later. Hardesty sat down, grimaced as he pulled up his trouser legs. He began to rub the scores of bruises on his calves and shins.

"Molecules did that," he said. "Molecules driven by the wind. But I had to send Maurer and myself almost to infinity to keep Streiber and his men from shooting me."

"They swarmed all over the place a moment after you disappeared," said Capet. "But they were too late. And when you came back, you came too fast. I don't see, though, what the wind had to do with it."

"Call it the Brownian movement," said Hardesty. "At normal size, billions of molecules bombard us on all sides at once. At any one second, there may be more on our left side than on our right, but the percentage of difference is so small it passes unnoticed."

"At microscopic size, the difference is appreciable. There are fewer molecules in a given area then. If a million

of them strike us on the side while eight hundred thousand strike the other, we'd notice the difference. In fact, we did notice it. That was the wind that had us crazy down there."

"I suppose when you got really small it was worse," said Capet. Hardesty nodded, still rubbing his bruises.

"You become a mere vibrating particle like those in Brown's solution when he proved the existence of molecules. I'm a living proof that there are molecules. Maurer is proof too—but a dead one. I left him down there somewhere." He gestured toward the microscope slide, then turned to Ileen.

"Well," he said coolly, "you got yourself a story—all about trypanosomes and things. Think your editor will give you a byline?"

"I'm tired of being a reporter," she said miserably. "I'm through as of now." She looked at him appealingly.

"In that case," he said, his hand reaching for a pocket of his vest, "you and I have business to do about a ring. Any objections?"

"I TALKED WITH GOD"

(Yes, I Did . . . Actually and Literally)

and as a result of talking with God, there was disclosed to me what is the most remarkable spiritual discovery of the ages. I discovered that in every man and woman there lives the most dynamic spiritual Power this world can ever know. So dynamic, and so fraught with tremendous possibilities is this Power, that its existence in you will amaze you with what it can do for you right here on earth.

For, being the Power of Almighty God, it possesses all the wisdom, all the ingenuity, all the intelligence there is in the universe. It is only limited by your ability to recognize and use it. You are living in complete ignorance of the staggering fact that when the Almighty created the human race, He ordained it so that we all can draw fully upon, and use, the Power of God himself. This is the greatest spiritual discovery of all time.

Try and imagine what such a limitless Power can do in your life. Think what your life would be like now, had you discovered this scintillating Power of

God twenty or thirty years ago. Could there be any material or spiritual lack in your life now? Of course there could not. You may have often suspected that such a Power is available to you, but you never suspected that it already exists in you, instantly available, and ready to spring into action the moment you need it. Well, this is the truth. This is our new discovery of how the Spirit of God operates in life. God knew what He was doing when He placed such a Power in you. Your duty is to discover the existence of this Power and use it.

The whole story cannot be told here. But you send us a post-card with your name and address on it, and free information will be sent you by return mail. Send the post-card to "Psychiana" Inc., Dept. 210, Moscow, Idaho. May we suggest that you do not delay? If such a Power is available to you, you want it. So mail the card for free information now. The address again is "Psychiana" Inc., Dept. 210, Moscow, Idaho.

N.B. Collier's Weekly, Time, Newsweek, American Mercury, Pic, Magazine Digest, and scores of other periodicals have given much publicity to this Movement. This new discovery of the Power of God is a very dynamic thing as you will probably discover, so write now. Information is free.

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(Adv.)

*Major Satura, Cruel Jap
Surgeon, is Pitted Against
a Marine and a Visitor
from Space!*



Suddenly, out of
empty air, there
appeared a tall,
slim girl

TROPHY

By SCOTT MORGAN

MAJOR SATURA was a logical man. As a representative of the Japanese Empire, he had for years been following the supremely logical instructions of his warlords—as a medical student in Vienna, an intern in New York, and a practicing surgeon in the important centers of the world. Also, as ordered, he had kept his eyes open, and Tokio had received plenty of valuable inside dope from handsome Major Satura.

Even now, marooned on this South

Pacific islet somewhere between New Guinea and the Carolines, he was handsome, in the enigmatic, sleek fashion so many women had found attractive. During the night he had managed to shave in the darkness, though he had no mirror, and he reflected with some satisfaction that the Yank corporal, who alone was left alive of the American bomber crew, would be looking like an ape. A decadent race, the whites. Even the Germans—but Major Satura closed his mind to that forbidden thought. It

wasn't his business. The warlords made their own plans.

He had been marooned here for two days now, and something rather inexplicable had happened. It had its beginning last night, when the Yank plane had swung into view above the sunset horizon, and, at Satura's orders, his men had raised a distress signal. If all had gone well, the plane would have landed on the beach, the crew would have emerged, and been shot down from ambush. Unluckily, there had been an unexpected development.

An aircraft of some strange type—it resembled a stubby torpedo, traveling low and incredibly fast—had flashed into view as the plane was leveling off. German? Perhaps. At any rate, it had been following the American ship. And it roared down over the island like a belching thunderbolt, raising a hurricane of blasting wind that caught the heeling Yank plane and cracked it up in the surf, a crumpled, hopeless wreck.

After that, the torpedo aircraft had simply disappeared. Perhaps it had landed on the other side of the island. Satura did not know, but he allowed for the possibility. There was danger in the Pacific these days—there would be danger, until Japan had crushed her enemies and assumed the dictatorship of the Orient that the Emperor demanded.

THERE had been a fight. The Yanks were more belligerent, even after that crackup, than anyone could have expected. They came inshore to be greeted with a withering rain of bullets from the underbrush—but, most illogically, they did not stop. They kept coming, the ones who were still alive. It was close work, bayonet and pistol, and, in the end, the white beach was bloodstained from more than a dozen corpses.

Major Satura was not one of these. He went away, biding his time till he could control the situation. Since only two Americans were left alive, and one of these was dying, it should not take too long. Yet the Yank corporal was armed, and—it did not pay to take chances. A trap, an ambush. . . .

Imperturbably the Major hid himself well among the *pandanus* leaves, well inshore, and spent the night grooming himself as though he were in his own luxurious apartment in Tokio. He spent an equal amount of time cleaning his gun. His bayonet he slid inside his tunic, a vague plan moving within his brain. He felt cheerful enough, for he had a great trust in his brain, that perfectly-adjusted colloid mechanism that had made him one of the most successful surgeons and spies in the Emperor's service.

Nevertheless Satura worried a little. It was rather odd that a pile of gold coins should be lying in the middle of one of the jungle trails. He had stumbled over that shining hoard in the night, and the bright tropical moonlight had revealed it to him with astounding clarity. For it was so obviously a mirage—

And yet it was not. The coins were real enough, and legal tender—English sovereigns, glittering like the dreams of a Midas. A uselessly expensive booby trap, Satura had thought. Too expensive. And there was no point in the thing. Had the Yank corporal planted the money? There had not been time. If not, then who had? Satura did not know, but he skirted the treasure carefully, far too wary to expose himself to danger until he was satisfied that the danger no longer existed. A grenade might be under the gold. It was, definitely, odd.

Crouching under a breadfruit tree, the Major massaged his long, slender fingers, while the chill of the night died before the sun rising in a blaze of pearl-crimson beyond the forest. He thought again of the torpedo ship of the night before. Had it landed? Was that the answer? And, if so, friend or foe? Satura's strong hand slipped into his blouse and caressed the steel of the bayonet.

Presently he decided to investigate the beach of last night's battle. A half hour's careful reconnoitering showed him that the corporal was gone, and a count of the bodies told him that he had one enemy left alive. The Major's im-

passive face shadowed. The man might be lurking anywhere, trying to kill him!

Not that Satura had any illusions about the sanctity of human life, or the Japanese race. As a surgeon, bodies were bodies, no matter what the race. And Yanks and Japs bled the same color. It was Satura's desire that he should not be the one to prove that obvious axiom.

So he found a clean handkerchief—it was typical of the man that he had one—and raised it on a stick, tying his gun atop the improvised flag of truce. Americans were sentimental. He knew the Yank corporal would not shoot him down without a parley, though no doubt the man would be suspicious. Planning well in advance, Satura took the bayonet from his blouse and hid it under a fallen *pandanus*-leaf near the pile of gold he had found on the inshore trail. But he did not touch the gold—not logical Major Satura.

Instead, he walked out on the beach and yelled *Kamerad* in several different languages. And, by this time, he had bandaged his right arm, after gashing it slightly to provide blood, and put it in a sling. Which took care of everything.

It did not quite take care of Corporal Phil Jarnegan's desire to step on Japs. He had been in the Pacific for quite some time now, discovering that the slant-eyed little yellow men were curiously unmoral, and that, to them, the end always justified the means. As Pearl Harbor, and certain executions in Tokio had testified. Not that those Tokio killings had been any surprise. It should not have taken that to make people realize that the Japs were not fighting according to international law. But it was another item in the long bill that was adding up, and would reach a grim total when it was finally presented for payment.

SO Corporal Jarnegan, being merely a big, tough lug who was in the war to kill Japs, came out of the jungle with his automatic leveled at Satura, and his middle finger trembling on the trigger. He had lost the index finger in

New Guinea, but it had not damaged his marksmanship. He looked at the Major, and the Major looked at him, and death trembled in the hot tropical air between the two. There were witnesses, but they did not move or speak.

"I have a flag of truce," Satura said suddenly, his eyes on the gun. He pronounced his I's almost perfectly, which was unusual for a Japanese.

Jarnegan did not answer, but his grey eyes got a little wider.

"You will respect a truce, Corporal," Satura said. "I am unarmed. My gun—"

"I see it," Jarnegan growled. "Had a bellyful of fighting last night, eh? You—" He expressed himself in a few well-chosen expletives.

Meanwhile the Major had been examining his opponent, and felt heartened. The American was obviously not too intelligent. It should be easy to outwit this opponent. And since the corporal had not shot yet, he was not going to. That was elementary psychology in any language.

"The fortunes of war," Satura smiled. "I am not responsible. I am a surgeon, Corporal, as you can see by my insignia. My mission is one of healing."

"You rank these men," Jarnegan growled, not moving. His eyes indicated the bodies on the beach. "You were in command. Ambush, eh?"

"The commanding officer is dead. I left him a few hours ago, inland. He was wounded in the fight."

Jarnegan said something rude. "What was that screwy ship that upset us?" he demanded. "One of yours?"

"No. I do not know. It had no wings. A new type. I had thought it might be an enemy, an Allied ship. Ah, it is uncomfortable standing here, with the sun in my eyes. May I—will you respect the truce?"

"Truce, bunk! I know you monkeys." Jarnegan came forward. "Put your hands up. First throw that gun away. That's it. Now let's see that automatic up your sleeve."

"I'm unarmed."

"Let's see." There was a swift search. The Major had spoken the truth, since

it suited his devious purposes. He was unarmed, except for his safety razor and a small pair of scissors in his tiny first-aid kit.

Jarnegan pocketed the Jap's gun. "Yeah," he said. "So you're my prisoner. We're both prisoners. No way off this island, is there?"

"I know of none."

"There'll be one of our planes over in a week or so, if not sooner. We were sending our position by radio. Only the air got jammed an hour before we cracked up, so it'll take time for the boys to find us. When they do, monkey, you'll find yourself locked up for the duration."

Satura shrugged. "I am a surgeon, not a fighter," he said, and was quite correct. There is a difference between a fighter and a killer. "Meantime," he added, "did you leave a booby trap in the jungle for me?" At Jarnegan's stare of surprise he went on quickly, describing the golden pile. "I do not know how it came there. It was placed on the trail recently. The coins were shining, not dusty."

"If you think I'm falling for a yarn like that," the corporal said, "you're a bigger dope than you look."

"As you like. I only thought that other ship, last night, it may have landed somewhere on the island."

"It's not such a big island. If it landed, we can find it."

"Its crew may find us first. And they may be allies—of one of us."

Jarnegan thought that over. His forehead wrinkled in concentration. "Okay," he said, at last. "I still think you're a lying lizard, but I've gotta look around the island anyhow. So come along. Stay in front of me, if you don't want a bullet in your belly." For a moment a savage fury showed in the Yank's hard face. It was gone instantly, but Satura had decided that he could afford to take no chances with this man. Only trickery—ambush—planned killing—would help.

And it was already planned.

So they went inland, along the trail, and there was the pile of gold. Jarnegan

stopped, his eyes narrowing, his hand on his gun-butt. Satura paused too, ahead of the corporal, and shrugged significantly. "I did not lie, you see," he said quietly. "We are not alone on this island."

"Of all the crazy things," Jarnegan muttered. "Dumping bullion here! I don't get it. Booby trap, eh?"

"It may be—" Satura stopped. Ice crawled down his spine, a shuddering chill that tore through the tropical heat and struck deep into him. For the pile of gold—vanished.

IN ITS place was, briefly, nothing.

And then—something. That something sprang out of empty air, so vividly clear and real that it was difficult to realize the miraculous manner of her coming. It was a girl, tall, slim, with a form like Aphrodite of the Shell, her whole body a symphony of smooth flowing lines that were graceful, and attractive almost beyond earthly allure.

A girl—empty!

For her eyes were like mirrors, blank shining colorless eyes, shadowed by dark lashes. Midnight ringlets fell about her rounded shoulders. Her arms were stretched out—

But her eyes were not human. No sorcery, no unearthly science, could breathe a soul into that lovely mirage.

Satura saw it first. He understood women, and his mind, though not comprehending the nature or purpose of the miracle, seized on the opportunity for which he had been waiting. One enemy is better than two. And almost at his feet, where he had stopped, was the *pandanus*-leaf under which his bayonet was hidden.

He dropped to his knees. Jarnegan's gaze flicked to him, saw no danger, and went back to the girl. The American's hand still rested on his gunbutt, but he was undecided—waiting, puzzled and baffled. Satura did not wait. The bayonet was hidden behind him now, and he rose to his feet, edging away, as though terrified of the apparition.

"Shoot it," he whispered. "You have a gun. Shoot it, Corporal. Quick! Don't

wait—it's dangerous. Can't you see that?"

"No," Jarnegan said. "It's a girl." His voice was harshly uneasy. Loudly he said, "Who the devil are you, anyhow? Better talk up quick. Know what a gun is?"

"She may not know," Satura said. "But she will learn, now, what a bayonet is."

On the word he struck. The sharp steel drove in smoothly in Satura's strong, deft hands, and the breath went out of Jarnegan with a prolonged groan of pain. He tried to swing his automatic around, but the major's hand chopped down in a vicious blow at his wrist. Then Jarnegan was down, coughing blood.

He kicked up at Satura's body. The bayonet thrust had been at an awkward angle, and had disabled but not killed the Yank. He was still alive, far too much so for the major's satisfaction.

Ju jutsu helped. There was a free-for-all, ending when Satura managed to grip the bayonet and twist it in the wound. Jarnegan collapsed. Satura expelled his breath in a long sigh of relief and hastily stripped his victim of weapons. The bayonet had torn free, and blood was seeping from the corporal's back.

Satura backed up, leveling his own automatic, and keeping an eye on the girl, who had neither moved nor spoken. When he got about ten feet away, Jarnegan came to life, with the incredible vitality one grew to expect from these bull-headed Yanks, and struggled up, trying to rush the major. Satura fired. His bullet hit the mark.

"You—yellow—"

Crack! went the automatic again. But Jarnegan, badly wounded, had lurched aside, and this time the slug missed. Before Satura could fire again, the corporal had flung himself headlong into the forest walling the trail, and was gone. In that thick jungle it would be easy to follow the trail he was audibly breaking, but Satura narrowed his eyes and lifted his gun, fanning out the shots so that they covered a wide arc. He heard a muffled cry and the sound of a fall.

Only then did he follow, cautiously.

He did not find Jarnegan. He found a blood-stained trail leading into the green gloom, and he decided not to follow. As a trained surgeon, he knew that the Yank had been mortally wounded, and there was no sense in risking his own life unnecessarily. So, smiling in a pleased fashion, he went back to investigate the mirage.

The girl had gone.

In her place was a complete short-wave sending apparatus.

Major Satura, wondering what the dickens was going on, thought grim thoughts about booby traps, and demolished the short-wave with a few bullets. He did not dare use it himself, but he did not want Jarnegan to find it before the corporal died.

Leaving the wreckage, he returned to the beach and collected the weapons, throwing most of them far out to sea, but saving plenty of ammunition in case of need. On his last trip to the water's edge, he was surprised, on returning, to find a Zero on the beach behind him.

NOBODY was in the plane, and its presence was highly improbable. Satura's dark face grew more impassive than ever. He raised his gun carefully, sighting, but not firing. A less intelligent man might have been frightened. Perhaps Satura was, physically, but he knew the value of fear-propaganda, and the necessity of keeping tight control over his nerves.

Logic — ruthlessness — against these, nothing could stand. Provided that an intelligent, trained brain lay in back of those acquired traits.

The major raised an eyebrow at the too-inviting plane, skirted it warily, and dived into the jungle. A few feet along the trail he noticed a branch he had not seen before. Light glinted there on metal. An automatic pistol. . . .

It was logical for it to be there. One of the Yanks must have dropped it last night. So, logical as ever, Major Satura came forward, bent over, and picked up the weapon—

His hand went through it. It had no

tangible existence. He jerked back, taking alarm too late, and simultaneously a wrenching, jarring shock shook every atom of his body. Blazing light blinded him. He felt swift vertigo, a giddy rocking in which gravity was lost and the winds of darkness were tearing at the essence of his soul itself, shaking it perilously, and then the nightmare metamorphosis had passed, leaving no trace.

But he was no longer in the jungle.

The trap had been sprung. The ambush had succeeded. The snare had worked. Automatic out, Satura stared around, lips skinned back from his teeth, the emotionless mask shattered for once. This was not logic—it was—was sorcery.

He held that thought for only a moment. After that, common sense came to his aid. There were walls around him; he stood in a bare, shining chamber about seven feet square, and there was a door set in one wall, though without any keyhole that Satura could discover. And the room was perfectly bare and featureless. Walls, ceiling and floor were of a dull grayish metal that sent out a pale, shadowless glow.

A prison?

He waited, with mounting impatience, for the Enemy to manifest himself, but nothing happened. At last the Major holstered his gun and took a few slow steps toward the door, testing the floor with his toe.

He was reminded, somehow, of a trapline, set in advance, while the trapper returns to his cabin and makes his rounds only at intervals. Was the Enemy absent, then? It seemed possible. At least, Satura hoped so. It would give him a little more time to investigate this perilous mystery.

The door was complicated. Few men could have fathomed the mystery of the lock. But Satura had a mind above the average in its capabilities, and his hands were surgeon's hands, trained and accurate to a hair's breadth. He had some tools with him, in his first-aid kit, and he improvised others. He worked on that door for five hours, while sweat

streamed down his flat cheeks and soaked his tunic. Each hour, he allowed himself a five-minute pause for a brief rest. No more than that.

One must take advantage of a reprieve. And this was merely a reprieve; a temporary stay; Satura was certain of that. His deft fingers flew. More and more, as he worked, he became convinced of something shockingly unlikely. The mind that had contrived this lock was not an earthly mind—or, if it was, it certainly was not human. For the principles of the lock's construction followed intricate patterns of rhythm and pressure that were not based on ordinary laws of physics. As though the door, and its lock, had been made to resist physical conditions—such as abnormal pressure—which do not exist on this planet, save in the great depths of the ocean, or in the upper stratosphere.

And as he worked, he theorized. But he had little enough to work with; a few vague, unsatisfactory clues, and they added up to nothing in particular. Despite his hard-held stoicism, Satura felt a mounting tension coiling within him like a tight spring. If the door did not yield soon—

But it yielded at last, vanishing like a burst bubble, leaving no trace of its existence in the square portal. A force-field, perhaps. That did not matter. The important thing now was to get the blazes out of here, the Major decided, lapsing into expressive American vernacular.

THROUGH the portal he could see a little. The lighted walls of his prison sent glowing paths across that cryptic threshold, and gradually his eyes became accustomed to the gloom. Nothing stirred. Neither sound nor motion existed in the next room—for it was a room, Satura realized now, though its geometry was distorted—either in actuality or by the semi-darkness.

It lay in still, strange Gothic darkness. Yet it was possessed of a curious familiarity to Satura; he had the in-

explicable feeling that he had seen it before. But, that, of course, was impossible.

He took a few steps forward and paused, waiting. The dusty fan of light spread behind him, throwing his gigantic shadow on the farther wall. That wall was curved, Satura saw, but there were planes and angles in its construction that he could sense if not glimpse.

Transparent cylinders, of varying sizes, floated unsupported, except for pencil-thin beams of light at either end. They swung from these horizontal light-threads like hammocks. And a platform, fitted with unfamiliar apparatus, brought home to the Major a fact he should have realized before.

This was an operating room.

He glanced around quickly. There was another door, open this time, and he hurried through it with scarcely a pause to investigate. He was, of course, still armed, but he had no assurance that his bullets would avail against the—Hunter.

A Hunter from the stars. An explorer, alien, inhuman, seeking his quarry in the distant depths of ultimate space, searching the worlds for his quarry—his trophies that hung, mounted, in the enormous chamber Satura had just entered. Tall it was, and correspondingly wide, and the dark gloom made it seem far larger. From the gray shadows things out of nightmare emerged slowly into view—the trophies of the Hunter, mounted, preserved, incredibly lifelike, upon the bare walls.

Not many had come from Earth. There was an elephant's head, trunk curled, red eyes blazing; there were huge-clawed paws—no more—that Satura recognized as having once belonged to a mole, the powerful shovel-forefeet that had propelled it underground; there were the rattles of a diamond back; and a few others from this planet. All functional, all logical, all representing the creature's chief claim to evolutionary survival. A mole lives by its paws. An elephant's strong, delicate trunk enables it to survive and feed. And that bladder-like object hanging near by was,

probably, the ink-sac of a cuttlefish.

These were sufficiently normal; the rest were not. The Hunter had scoured worlds to get these trophies, Satura thought, his mouth going dry. That greenish, three-eyed, bestial head with its crown of limber tentacles—what planet had once held its tusked ferocity? And that unlikely slab of flesh set with a network of flashing, jewel-like crystals—what purpose had that served?

THERE were others, many others, for the room was huge. Satura did not waste too much time here. He was looking for escape.

No door was locked, he found; only the door that had locked him into his prison. From the trophy room he passed into what seemed to be a sleeping compartment, though the furnishings were not designed for human comfort or habitation. The major had an uneasy feeling that the Hunter might not even be of flesh and blood. Theoretically it was possible for beings of pure force to exist. Or a combination of force and flesh—carbon base and electrical energy.

The engine room, at the nose of the ship. That he was within the torpedo-shaped aircraft he had glimpsed the night before Satura was certain now. The curve of the walls indicated that, as well as the layout of the rooms. The engines—well, they gave Satura a cold, frightened sensation in the pit of his stomach. He tried to touch one, but his hand was halted a few inches from the plastic bar he reached for. Force-field again. Or its equivalent.

Quite by accident he found the door for which he had been searching. It was located high up in the wall, as though the Hunter might have been able to fly up to it, which Satura could not do. He gathered together some curious-looking furniture, stacked it in a pile, and clambered up, his heart pounding. If his captor should return now!

The door was simple enough. A twist, a push, and the valve was open, letting in the warm hibiscus-scented afternoon wind. It was still early; the sun was just past noon. And the tropical forest

lay all around. There had been no attempt to conceal or camouflage the ship.

IT WAS a long drop to the ground, but Satura took the risk rather than delay. He landed painfully, and for a moment thought his ankle had failed him. But the twinge passed, and he made for the jungle, limping a little. Once he looked back. There was nothing to see; the ship from space lay motionless, a dark titan resting on alien ground.

The Major ran. He had more clues now, and was building up to a definite and unpleasant conclusion. First of all, he knew well that this was an antagonist he could not physically defeat. His tour of the ship had told him that. Bullets—ridiculous! Only strategy and logic could help him now.

For he was marooned on the island with the Hunter, and he knew that when the Hunter returned, the fantastic scientific powers of the alien being could track him down and capture him without the slightest difficulty. Only the fact that the creature had been absent had saved Satura now.

It added up. Big game hunters collect trophies. If life existed elsewhere in the Solar System, or in other systems, there was no reason why life patterns should follow completely alien lines. Science was based on certain rigid principles. Specimens are required for many purposes. Trophies are collected for two reasons; as specimens, and for sport.

In this particular case, there was specialization. The Hunter had not preserved merely the heads of the creatures he had bagged. On the contrary, he had been thoroughly scientific about it, and preserved only the vital parts—the parts that were vital from the evolutionary viewpoint. A mole's claws, an elephant's trunk, a man's—head.

Satura, ploughing doggedly through the forest, nodded thoughtfully. The head, the brain, was representative of *genus homo*. Undoubtedly the Hunter had been pursuing that Yank plane, trying to bag his prize, when the crack-up

had occurred. And after that, the Hunter had simply set his traps automatically and gone off about whatever strange business he might have elsewhere on Earth.

A lesser man, the Major thought, might have yielded to superstitious cowardice. He did not. He was afraid, but that was nothing distressing, it was the danger signal that warned him and kept him alive. Those snares, now, might prove difficult.

One ties a kid goat to capture a tiger, or a crocodile. To lure birds, bread-crumbs will do. But for human beings, more complicated lures are necessary. Gold, women, guns, a means of escape from the island as represented by the plane on the beach.

Radio projection of visual images? Was that how it had been done? Satura did not know; he did not care a great deal. The whole point was that the Hunter could read the minds of humans as easily as men could foresee the reactions of a rabbit. He had not even troubled to attend to the matter himself, probably. Robot apparatus, specially trained and conditioned, might have laid the traps and snatched Satura into the prison cell within the ship. Remembering the operating room, he bared his teeth in a mirthless grin.

But he was Major Satura, not a superstitious, helpless fool like—for example—that Yank corporal. That Yank—

Satura stopped short, his eyes widening. The answer had come to him suddenly, as though by inspiration. It was not inspiration, though; it was merely logic, seen clearly by his keen brain.

Item: the Hunter wanted—must want—the head of a human being as a specimen. There had been none in the ship's trophy room.

Item: It was impossible to escape from the island till help came. The Hunter's science could easily track down his quarry.

Therefore: find another quarry.

Satura struck off at an angle into the forest, much relieved, but knowing that he must work fast. It might be, of course, that the Hunter did not want

the complete head, merely the brain. That was a chance he'd have to take. Yet it did not seem likely. The trophies had been complete parts, not butchered organs.

Another head—

Presently he found Jarnegan's blood trail and followed it till he discovered the American soldier, unconscious under thorny bushes, where he had tried to conceal himself. Makeshift, crude bandages were about the corporal's torso, and Satura's lip curled scornfully at sight of such sloppy work. Still, there was no time to waste now.

HE FOUND wood, kindled a fire, and brought fresh water from a nearby spring, setting it to boil. His first-aid kit came out, and his razor. Complete sterilization was impossible, but at least it would help to take as many precautions as he could.

He stripped Jarnegan and examined the man's wounds. The bayonet gash had already stopped bleeding, and did not look serious. The bullet wound was another matter. The slug was embedded dangerously near the spine.

There in the clearing, in the hot afternoon, Major Satura worked at the task in which he excelled: surgery. He was a master; no one could deny that. And never had he performed an operation under such tremendous difficulties. All the while, his ears were tuned to any strange sound that might mean danger—that the Hunter was returning. Before that happened, he must be ready.

Three hours later he had finished, and was completely exhausted. Corporal Jarnegan was still unconscious, but he would live now, the bullet removed from his back, and his wounds washed aseptically and bandaged. Satura stepped back, expelling his breath in a long sigh, and looked down at the other.

A barbarian. Undoubtedly a barbarian. But he would be the Hunter's trophy, rather than Major Satura, who would survive to serve his Emperor and the Rising Sun. Though there must be certain sacrifices—

Jarnegan was ugly; there was no

doubt about that. His feet were large, unlike Satura's small ones, and his gnarled, strong hands, with the right index finger missing, compared unfavorably with the Japanese Major's slim, wiry hands. Ah, well. If it came to a choice—

The Hunter must be aided in his choice. Satura opened his razor, removed a blade, and sterilized it. Then he took a small metal mirror, aseptic material, and a few other items.

Since the Hunter desired a head—he would desire a good specimen, one in good condition. Not—mangled!

Once a little hiss of pain escaped Satura, even though he had managed to administer a local anaesthetic to himself. But the hypodermic was not infallible, and such a monstrous operation was sickening in its masochistic brutality.

Yet it was logical, and the only possible way now. Later, perhaps a plastic surgeon could remedy matters. Oh, undoubtedly! Aside from a few scarcely visible scars, Major Satura would be as handsome as ever.

Meanwhile, he was losing face. . . .

By the time he had finished, he was a gargoyle. Bandages hid all but his eyes. Beneath the bandages were muscles skillfully cut, wounds grotesquely enlarged, his mouth slitted—and worse. With shaking hands the Major lit a cigarette and sat down to wait. It had been even worse than he had expected.

Jarnegan woke up.

He opened his eyes, saw Satura, and let out a steady stream of profanity that continued unbroken for ten minutes by the Major's wristwatch. When he paused, Satura smiled.

"You are ungrateful," he pointed out, speaking painfully through the bandages. "I have saved your life. Or hadn't you noticed?"

Jarnegan snarled. "So what? You've got something up your sleeve. Have our guys landed? Figuring on keeping me as a hostage—that it?"

"Don't talk. You'll exhaust yourself. You are still weak."

"The blazes I am!" The American

struggled to his feet and stood swaying. He took a step forward.

Satura negligently unholstered his automatic. "A tribute to my medical skill. Yes, you'll live, Corporal. You lost a good deal of blood, but you're strong. Strong enough to shave yourself. Do that!"

Jarnegan stared. "Eh? What's the big idea?"

"I had no time, or I should have shaved you. Now do it yourself or I shall shoot you. There is hot water. No, I am not joking." The Major's silky voice hardened. "Do as I say, quickly!"

Corporal Jarnegan blinked, shrugged, and turned to obey. Satura smiled at him.

"The razor will not be much of a weapon against my gun, if that's in your mind."

There was no answer. Jarnegan took the metal mirror and scraped away at the stubble on his weathered cheeks.

the fallen weapon. Instantly, in the face of this immediate danger, Satura kicked out, but his toe missed its mark.

He grappled with Jarnegan. The corporal had the gun now, and—and—

And Satura felt the American's body floating away, dissolving, as the world itself was dissolving in the tremendous emptiness that had suddenly opened beneath him. Even at that moment, he had a brief touch of wonder at the efficacy of this mental anaesthetic, and then it took effect. Oblivion swallowed him.

His last conscious thought was one of triumph. He had won, in this duel of wits with a creature far more powerful than himself. He had used logic. . . .

Jarnegan's head, not his own butchered face, would look down from the shadows of the alien ship's trophy room.

An hour later Satura opened his eyes and saw a patch of starry sky. He was lying on the beach, near the fringe of jungle. Something had awakened him.

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"You monkey screwball," he muttered wiping the last of the lather from his chin. "I always knew Japs were crazy. Now I'm sure of it. What's been going on here, anyhow?"

SATURA said nothing. He was watching a shimmering point of light that had appeared about ten feet away, in empty air in the clearing. Even in the fading afternoon dusk he made out outlines—of a sort—surrounding the creature, like a tracery or a shadowgraph. Those outlines were not even remotely human, and the eye rebelled at following them.

The Hunter had returned.

As Jarnegan swung around, and as Satura automatically raised his gun, knowing its uselessness, a veil of — nothingness—dropped down upon them. The Major felt the gun drop from his hand, heard it thud on the ground. There was a scuffle. A body hurtled against his legs: Jarnegan, diving for

A man was tramping nearby, walking heavily, unafraid, and cursing as he walked. Satura recognized Jarnegan's voice.

He lay silent, hidden in shadows, till the sound had receded and vanished. His mind churned in wonder and foreboding. What had happened? Had the Hunter rejected both humans—found them both unsuitable for his collection?

Pain stung his bandaged face.

He lifted his head wearily and looked along the length of his body, noting that both guns were in his belt. He must have wrested the automatic from Jarnegan, then, during that last struggle. So the American corporal was unarmed, helpless. And—

Why had the Hunter not taken his trophy?

Not till Satura tried to stand erect did he understand. So great a surgeon was the Hunter, so perfect his healing powers, that there had been no pain. Cauterization was complete and aseptic.

The operating room in the alien ship had been used, after all. And the Hunter had collected another trophy — man's most valuable part, from the standpoint of evolution.

Not the brain, for, compared to the mind of the Hunter, human brains were less than those of the apes.

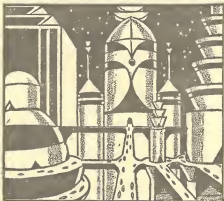
There is only one mammal on Earth that can cross its thumbs over its palm. Because man can do this, he is today the

dominant race.

A streak of fire flamed in the night sky, and a thunderclap of wind heralded the passing of the Hunter, in search of new trophies. But there was another hunter on the island now, a merciless avenger who needed no guns to make his kill.

As for Satura's own guns—

Without hands, a man cannot fire an automatic.



HEADLINERS IN THE NEXT ISSUE

WITH next issue we head for a stirring space adventure in another star system hundreds of light years away from old Sol and his family of planets. **STAR OF TREASURE**, by Charles W. Harbaugh, is an absorbing novel of buried wealth that puts Captain Kidd's loot and exploits to the blush. This story you will find to be in the epic class of the Captain Future yarns.

* * * * *

ON the heels of the featured novel we have lined up for you another space novelet of thrilling and fantastic adventure right within our own Solar System. **VEIL OF ATELLAR**, by Leigh Brackett, is a compelling story of love and emotion you won't recognize for such because of the amazing science and theories the author propounds for you and the vigorous way she handles the story theme.

* * * * *

NEXT on the cargo list is another splendid Amateur Prize-winning story called **UNSUNG HERO**, by Ruth Washburn. This story deals in a humorous but highly interesting way with the trials of a little Chicago mechanic who sets out to speed up the war effort and gets tangled up in another dimension.

* * * * *

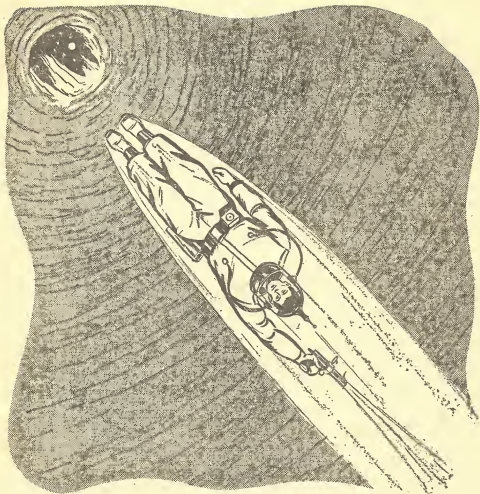
DOWN for a short story spot we have next a little yarn by a former winner of the Amateur Prize-story Contest. This is a tale of mining on one of the asteroids. **JUKE BOX ASTEROID**, by Joseph Farrell, is proof that first-story authors **DO** repeat.

* * * * *

ENTERTAINING features and as many other short stories as we can make space for will load next issue clear up to the Plimsoll Mark—if there is a Plimsoll Mark on space liners. And if everything stows away nicely, we'll include a couple of long short stories.

* * * * *

REARGUARD action, of course, will be furnished by Sergeant Saturn and his crew of rocketeers in **THE READER SPEAKS** section, which you find this month in the front of the good ship **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**, as well as continuing in the back. The old space dog now catches you coming and going. And you'll enjoy the letters from his kiwis. Some of them are thought-provoking nowadays!



The recoil sent him head foremost into the crater below him

MOON TRAP

By JOHN FOSTER WEST

Suspended in Space Dangles Lieutenant Cross, While the Fate of a Universe Depends on the Success of His Mission!

QUICKLY Lieutenant Enoch Cross of Lunar Expedition Three entered the space bridge of the *S. S. Marder* and came to attention before Captain Tone.

"Lieutenant Cross, number ten, reporting, sir." His voice was clipped

and precise, perhaps a little tense with expectancy. Captain Tone returned the salute.

"At ease!" he said to Cross and relaxed in his chair. "It wasn't really as bad as you thought, was it?" A half smile played around the corners

A Prize-Winning Amateur Contest Story

of his unusually grim mouth.

"But I don't understand, sir." Cross changed positions a bit nervously.

"I know all about it, Lieutenant Cross." The captain's voice had grown soft, almost kindly. There was a tinge of respect in the way he scrutinized the young officer before him. "I knew your father well, used to live near your old home back on Vermilion Plateau when you were young. In fact I was living there at the time you fell in the old, deserted mine shaft and almost crushed your skull. You never forgot the old mine, did you?"

"How do you know, sir?" Cross seemed confused.

"Mothers know everything about their sons, Lieutenant. Your mother knew you feared little, out in the open light, but that you would not enter a dark tunnel to unfasten a dog you loved. Men in charge of such an expedition as this must know all about their personnel, Lieutenant."

"I understand, sir." Enoch Cross had been thrown a bit off guard. "I admit, sir, it was a horrifying experience. Out there in space between the Moon and Earth it—it seemed as if we were lost in a hole deeper than time, and the heavenly bodies only made it appear deeper."

"Lieutenant Cross, a man who will face a terror so deep rooted, even for the salvation of dying humanity, has courage. Courage, sir, that I envy." Bronze hardness now crept back into the captain's face. "You are quite aware of the situation, and your duties, Lieutenant?"

LIEUTENANT CROSS hesitated before answering.

"I am aware of my duties, sir. But not completely aware of the situation. I know that we must find a huge deposit of radium. The life of every inhabitant of United Earth depends on it. What I don't know, sir, is why, day after day, back on Earth thousands and more thousands of people become walking automatons, why they walk until they can stand no longer. And keep moving until they die from sheer exhaustion and malnutrition. I know that most of it is shrouded in military secrecy."

"The situation has grown critical, that I admit, Lieutenant."

"Worse than that, Captain. Mass hysteria can be expected if the full significance of the malady is learned by the populace." The black eyes of Cross seemed to stare through Captain Tone. "Sometimes, sir, it is hard to be a soldier, carrying on your duties, surrounded by such madness."

"Yes, yes, I know, Lieutenant." The captain's voice was firm rather than harsh. "There are some things a junior officer must not know. Considering the important duties invested in you, Lieutenant, and the hazards facing you it is right you should now learn the complete facts. General King has given the orders. The success of this expedition depends upon your carrying them out. The life of the entire population of Earth rests with you and nine other engineers, perhaps all life in the Universe."

"Out there in the dark, knowing everything would help us, sir."

"The malady is a nervous disorder caused by exposure to radiation from atomic combustion." Even grim Captain Tone appeared ill at ease in discussing this nightmare that haunted Earth. "Emanations from atomic combustion deaden the part of the brain controlling conscious action. All movements become subconscious."

"The patient goes through habitual motions, the most eminent of which is walking. Whether the patient has any consciousness at all doctors have been unable to learn. This much they have learned. It is contagious." Captain Tone's voice dropped to a murmur. "It is spreading with increasing rapidity."

"And the radium, sir?"

"Radium is the only cure yet discovered, Cross. Counter emanations arise from radium. You, Lieutenant, know about radium?"

"I know that practically all radium on earth has been exhausted. No new deposits have been found for over a century. But why the Moon, sir?"

"Sir John Eaton has developed a huge radium detector. From his studies he proves somewhere on the satellite is an immense deposit of radium. We haven't time to purify

enough RA. We must, Lieutenant, we *must* find a deposit of almost pure radium, and we have only three Earthly weeks."

"Sir, one more thing?"

"If possible, Lieutenant!"

"The ship, sir?"

Captain Tone's face softened. He turned and looked through the transparent quartz space shield composing the nose of the huge space ship. For a minute his eyes wandered over the rugged surface upon which the huge craft rested.

"You remember the recoil in that atom pistol you are carrying, Lieutenant?" There was a twinkle in the Captain's eyes.

"Yes, I remember quite well." Enoch Cross grimaced as he recalled the sore arm he had always carried away from the shooting range back on Earth.

"Sir John Eaton, along with an able staff of technicians, developed the *Marter*. It wasn't so hard, using atomic combustion as thrust, and goaded by desperation. This craft is quite safe and efficient. You remember the fate of the first two expeditions to the moon?"

"I remember, sir?"

CAPTAIN TONE'S manner altered. Once more he became an impersonal commanding officer.

"You know the tenth district of exploration, Lieutenant? Any more questions?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Your equipment?"

"In order, sir?"

"Carry on!"

Cockney turned from the switch-board of the ethergraph as Cross entered the control room of the *Marter*.

"Hi golly, do be keerful, Enoch!" he pleaded, rubbing his red hands together.

"What are you so nervous about? I'm the one that's going out there to trample over the Moon. I'm the one who will get the flat feet!" Cross grinned at the fat Englishman while he struggled into the space suit.

"Who said I was h'excited? Blimy, I never get h'excited."

"You talk good English until you

do get excited. You lug. You—" The rest of Cross' words were cut off as he brought the space helmet in place over his head.

A few minutes later the remainder of the oxygen was pumped from the narrow space locker in the side of the *Marter*. Lieutenant Enoch Cross stepped down to the cold dry surface of Luna.

Three weeks later despair had descended upon Cross. The radiophone messages he received indicated a similar mood on the part of his fellow explorers scattered over the rugged surface of the moon. A despair for the race of man, for the life of a planet. Three weeks on the Moon and the allotted time almost up. Supplies had run low. In fact, they must depart from Luna when fiery-faced Sol peeped over the jagged horizon of the satellite.

Cross slowly pushed his cumbersome spacesuit forward over the rough foothills of the Apennines. Like a small ant lost in a world of uncanny buildings, he made his way between jagged spires, pinnacles and horny boulders. His feet trod beaches of pumice that had not known moisture for a billion years, if ever. He kept moving his radium detector from right to left, studying the meter fastened to his arm.

Awkwardly he tottered up a slope studded by sharp, spiky rock and black-pointed obtrusions of ebon flint. Through a pass he slowly made his way, a pass between two skyscrapers like rocks, guarding this narrow gateway, giant inverted icicles of frozen lava.

They thrust their dagger points at the blue, black heart of the hovering sky where a billion rubies glowed.

Just before he reached the place where the pass dipped down in another sudden swell, a dark black line at his feet caught his attention. It was perhaps six inches wide and extended from sight in both directions.

He dropped to his knees and examined it curiously. A scratch from his finger left a bright streak twinkling in the starlight. A vein of lead. Sometime in the past ages there had probably been radium here, but after

seventeen hundred years, radium breaks down and changes into something else.

HE CLAMBERED to his feet and resumed his cumbersome journey down the rough pitted defile. He shifted his detector needle from the left back toward the right. Suddenly it went crazy. It leaped and quivered, clicking first against one side then swinging clear around to the other. Backward and forward it leaped, its gyrations slowing until the needle stopped on zero, buzzing fiercely.

So wild were its vibrations Cross could feel them through his steel-bestos suit, an amazing feat for so delicate a needle. Had something gone wrong with the small mechanism? If there had, he might as well retrace his lagging steps for he could find no radium without it. This he would have done had he not been scheduled to travel another mile before doubling back.

In his amazement over the gyrations of the small radiometer, Cross had speeded up his footsteps. Now he was stumbling rapidly down the uneven slope, too interested in the instrument to see where he was going. When he did look it was too late. In trying to halt he lost his balance and fell on his back. Then he continued to slide at terrific speed along an ever steepening slope.

Like a helpless bundle he shot down an abrasive incline. He felt knobs and obtrusions gouging the sides and back of his space-suit and grabbed wildly for them to arrest his fall. The small protrusions and fissures crumbled at his touch and he continued the rushing descent, feet foremost. Unless he soon reached bottom or managed to stop, he would be killed.

The slope increased. His speed grew greater. In desperation Cross raised his head and tried to see his destination. What lay before him, a wall or a cliff? Instantly he closed his eyes to shut out a fearsome sight. His blood seemed to congeal with terror. Even as he comprehended his fate, he went shooting into space. Then he fell. His body went into the depths of Luna's greatest and most

appalling mystery, one of her huge craters.

Cross had always had a horror of depth, and holes. Now below him extended a hole so deep its termination was clothed in pitch blackness.

With quaking heart, as he tumbled downward, he strained his eyes through the dark murk, striving to see the bottom. For a time his speed increased and then remained at maximum. The gravitational pull of the Moon is far less than that of Earth, but it was great enough to cause the walls to fly by him with dizzy velocity. The points and projections had become a blur. Soon the light faded and he could see only dim movement. Downward he plunged.

He raised his face to get a last glimpse of space and the stars as he shot away. The crater's mouth slowly closed over him as distance increased. It drew together above him like the top of a pouch being closed. Then came total darkness.

Enoch Cross who from early childhood had always dreaded night was buried in it now. The sensation of falling had disappeared. Only the pressure of the spacesuit upward against his feet indicated that he was still dropping like an invisible plummet into the inky depths of the Moon.

Time passed. Perhaps a few seconds, perhaps a few hours. Every moment he expected to meet oblivion. So he gripped his metallic gloves and closed his eyes, breathing in terror.

WOULD it ever end? Already he seemed to have fallen through the Moon for one thousand years. To the horrified Cross it appeared impossible that he could continue to exist in a realm of perpetual fear.

As the spacesuit continued to press gently against his feet an awareness stole over him, focusing attention. To him was borne the presence of some force, a medium that did not belong to this place of black shadows.

Fearfully he opened his eyes and gazed about. Light! His mouth flew open. Yes, it was true. There was no mistake. Flickering rays of light glowed about him, flickering soft

beams of eerie incandescence. They became stronger.

Light miles below the surface of the moon? Light in the center of the Moon? Impossible! Cross knew the internal fires of the Moon had burned out millions of years before. A new dread shot through him. Could it be boiling lava and fire? He wondered why he failed to feel any heat. The impact of striking the bottom of this shaft would be just as disastrous, anyway. He steeled himself. He must hold fast to his senses. He would try to meet death bravely.

A gleaming golden disk came to view. It spread like a whirlpool as his hurtling body approached. The walls of the crater swept by like a belt running wild on a mad machine. He shot upward, feet first from the plain of a world that stretched away, curving, not to a horizon, but upward on every side, like the concave inner surface of a bowl.

It was a landscape of greenish golden light dotted here and there by huge black dots, the entrance of other craters.

For one instant Cross was aware of this astounding phenomenon. Then he was leaving it. He shot straight upward from the plain, feet first, with the same momentum of his fall. Through a space, mellow from nebulous light, he flew.

How long he was in space he did not know. Possibly the actual time was short. But finally he discovered he was rushing straight upward from another bowl-shaped plain. Or falling toward it as one might consider direction in this topsy-turvy world.

He also became aware that his momentum was decreasing, but it still would be sufficient to crush him to death. He looked past his feet, at the spot where he would strike. To his surprise a great black circle disfigured the light of the golden plain, another crater, opposite the one from which he had just emerged.

He shot upward or fell into it feet first, for how could one determine direction in the center of a world? What force drew him upward into the bottom end of the crater, Cross could not at the time imagine.

Pitch darkness again enveloped him. Then his momentum slowly decreased until he seemed to stand still. The helmet of the light spacesuit began to press gently against his head, indicating that he was returning to the center of the Moon. Some time later he again popped out into the glowing field of light, whizzed across the space and into the black crater from which he originally had emerged.

Again Cross turned cold with apprehension. What was happening? Could it be possible that some force was returning him to the surface of the Moon? He waited breathlessly. Moments passed. His movement in the opposite direction he had first fallen grew slower and slower.

Finally he stopped and began to retrace his pendulum-like journey towards the middle world. Despair filled his breast. The pressure of his spacesuit against his feet told him that. With no force to act on the outer surface of his spacesuit, his body remained in the same position, his head and feet the axial directions of his movement.

FOR an interminable period Cross shot backward and forward from one crater to the other. Back and forth across the golden world he rocketed, like a great ball, tossed by hidden gods. A living pendulum, he made numberless wild journeys, shortening his arc with each change of direction.

He grew dizzy. A nausea attacked his stomach. His temples throbbed with pain. Pinpoints of light flickered before his eyes, keeping time to the waves of agony in his head. The pressure of blood in his head, when he fell in the direction of his feet and the lack of blood when he fell in the opposite direction was beginning to tell on his faculties. A bursting wave of agony crept over him and he lost consciousness.

When he finally opened his eyes once more, wonder almost overcame him. Dizziness still whirled through his bewildered faculties. But a single glance around restored his memory and told him where he was. He was no longer moving. But his body

hung suspended in space, like a grotesque metal balloon, perhaps a thousand feet above the golden plain. Below lay a crater through which he might have entered this hollow world. Directly above yawned another black hole. He assumed the crater above was the one through which he had fallen into the center of the Moon, as his head was in that direction.

What held him here, suspended within the heart of this satellite? What mighty laws and forces were experimenting with him? It was a problem too vast for his splitting brain.

Cross manipulated a lever and a vitamin tablet passed down its chute into his mouth. An ammonia tablet followed in its wake. He could feel the change almost instantly.

A glimmer of the truth concerning his predicament took form in his mind. He believed he had the answer. At least this explanation would work out with the probable laws controlling the movement of mass. He had fallen into a crater of the Moon, had fallen straight down to the middle, which was hollow. His momentum had carried him past the center of gravity and into a crater on the other side.

When the gravity behind him overcame his decreasing momentum, he had returned to the original crater. This change of direction had been repeated until his momentum had slowly been spent. Finally he had stopped altogether, near one side of the moon's inner surface.

Gravity acting upon his body mass had at last brought about a perfect balance. The centrifugal force created by the moon's motion through space was responsible for this. He had become a motionless satellite to the interior of Luna.

How long had he been here? Maybe hours, perhaps days. Thoughtlessly he glanced at his arm where a wristwatch would have been back on Earth. Instead of a watch he was looking at the face of his radiometer, was staring at the small hand. The needle was standing against the stop nearest the plain of golden green light below him. The middle was

bent as if it wished to go further, much further.

Now the truth dawned upon him. A whoop burst forth inside the close confinement of his space helmet, a whoop that almost deafened him in the close quarters of the helmet. It was a victory cry for life, life for billions of fellow mortals back on Earth. The inside of the moon was radium, almost pure radium. That was what the golden plain was composed of, radium and more radium, tons of it, thousands of tons of it.

Wildly Cross reached for the switch of his radiophone. He would call the *Marter*. The crew could enter through the crater into which he had fallen, rescue him and take enough radium to save the Earth. Suddenly Cross felt a wave of dread sweep over him. What if the crew had given him up for lost and had returned to Earth. There was no telling how long it had been since he had fallen into the Moon trap. The spacemen were to wait two hours for possible stragglers.

Had Captain Tone returned defeated to die with his fellow man? Would this great discovery remain forever buried here in the heart of the satellite? Was Enoch Cross destined to meet his ultimate doom, suspended helplessly in space above this plain of radium? What else could be expected under the circumstances?

Cross snapped the radiophone switch and made another terrible discovery. No buzz of power greeted his ears. His radiophone, the only hope for him and a dying world, would not work. What was wrong? The batteries couldn't be exhausted.

Cross felt at the side of his suit for the wire connecting the batteries with the head set in his helmet. No wire! He bent his head to look.

A JAGGED, insulated wire, two inches long, protruded from the battery box and another fragment dangled from his helmet. During his mad flight down the rough crater side the cable had been torn in two.

Calling the space ship was impossible unless he could connect the two wires. What could he connect them

with, hanging helplessly in space? He racked his brain for a plan.

Suddenly his hand closed over the butt of his rocket pistol and he drew forth the weapon. Fitting the barrel to the battery end of the wire, he placed the handle against the torn wire protruding from the headset. He was keyed up to hear the hum of electricity, surging power. The instrument remained dead. It required several minutes before he worked out the reason. The gun was long enough, it reached easily but the handle was a nonconductor, having been fashioned thus to protect the hand of the one who wielded it in case of a short-circuit.

Once more hope died. A wave of rage and despair swept over him. Tearing loose the pistol from the wires he pulled the trigger in a gust of fury. A blazing bolt of energy split the glowing space around his feet. The recoil almost tore the gun

age, he flashed out at the mouth of the crater. Going with the speed of a meteor he darted far upward into a calm starlit sky. Far below him loomed the black hole he had thought was to be his grave. Above the craggy lifeless surface of Luna his flashing journey slowly dwindled to a stop.

For a moment he hung suspended. Momentum had ceased.

Turning the barrel of his pistol in a horizontal direction, he depressed the trip to ultimate. The thrust against his middle almost broke him in two. The shock whipped him to the right, far out over the surface of Luna. Then he settled towards the surface. With a final flash downward to cushion his fall, Cross settled safely on the bottom of the ravine through which he had entered the crater. He knew it was the same one for the vein of lead he had seen before stretched from sight in both directions, at his feet.

Next Issue's Amateur Contest Prize-Winner: **UN Sung Hero**,
an Entertaining Fantasy of the Fourth Dimension by **RUTH WASHBURN**

from his grip. It sent him head foremost into the crater below him.

He shot away from the center of the Moon like a bullet. The small pistol did not contain sufficient recoil thrust to carry him clear of the gravity center of the Moon. Yet Cross recalled what he had learned about a pendulum. He conceived a plan to get out of this moon trap.

At the end of his momentum he started back on the journey towards the interior once more. Now he fell, feet first. But his speed did not remain free fall. He gripped the pistol fiercely so that it would not be torn from his grasp and held the trip trigger back.

With trip back, muzzle blazing, he shot back down through the crater again, across the golden central space, and into the other crater, feet first. When the thrust and momentum were overcome by gravity, he repeated this process. Backward and forward from one crater to the other, he traveled, going further with each blazing journey. At last, after what seemed an

Cross collapsed to the rocks, panting like a spent runner. He cursed the tears that crept into his eyes.

YES, he was safe. But time pressed, so he scrambled to his feet. The space ship would leave before the sun arose. Lunar dawn could not be far off. This would last for 29 Earth days. If the *Marter* had departed for home he had been abandoned to die. The salvation of Earth would remain forever locked up in the heart of the moon. No blame could be leveled toward Captain Tone, only pity for the doomed population of the world he loved. Captain Tone had returned home to die in familiar surroundings.

Suddenly a blazing band of light several miles away leaped from the surface of Luna. It broke into Lieutenant Cross' view near the edge of Mare Imbrium, and moved upward into the heart of space. That curved golden band grew steadily longer. The ship! The ship! The vessel was returning for Earth.

Cross snapped the switch of his radiophone. The instrument remained dead. The senseless humming of the diaphragm brought a feeling of futility to Cross, rage and despair. He stood, legs wide apart, watching the bright end of the retreating light band, which was the stern of the space ship, disappearing into space.

The eyes of Cross fell to the ribbon of lead stretching away from where he stood. The shiny scratch he had made, hours before, glittered balefully like a small wicked dagger. Suddenly Cross crouched beside the vein of lead. First he straightened the ends of the two broken wires. One connected with the battery at his belt and the other protruded from the radiophone in his helmet. Then he placed the naked ends against the vein of raw lead.

A roar burst from his earphones. Connection had been established between his battery and head-set.

"Lieutenant Enoch Cross, calling Spaceship *Marter*," he shouted. "Lieutenant Enoch Cross calling Spaceship *Marter*."

"Spaceship *Marter* answering Lieutenant Enoch Cross," came a prompt reply.

"Spaceship *Marter*, pick me up in the foothills of Apennines near Lonesome Crater, pick Cross up in Apennines near Lonesome Crater."

"Message received," said the voice from the vessel, repeating Cross' words according to regulations. Cross recognized the tones as those belonging to Cockney.

"Connect me to all levels of space-

ship to broadcast news," Cross shouted into the mouthpiece. "News for all men of spaceship *Marter*, including British operator."

Clicks sounded in Cross' headphones as connections were made in the far-off vessel.

"Lieutenant Cross connected with all levels of spaceship."

"Reporting huge deposit of radium has been discovered in the center of the Moon," said Cross into the transmitter. "Enough radium to save one million Earths, enough radium to make a stratocar to Mars. Deposit is easily accessible through Lonesome Crater, in Apennines. That is all."

Faintly through the earphones, muffled by distance, he could hear cheers as the crew broke into rejoicing. Then in ordinary tones he again spoke into the transmitter.

"Say, you space hounds," he inquired, "what do you mean by setting out to Earth, leaving me to thumb my way home. And you ought to see the inside of Lonesome Crater, boys. It's fairly crawling with radium."

Cross watched the sharp ribbon of light sweep around in an arc and point toward him. The rough jungle of spires, crags, and canyons stretched away on all sides. Stars twinkled in black depths of space.

But Cross saw none of these things.

He was lying across the vein of lead. His eyes were closed. Beneath the breastplate of the spacesuit his lungs rose and fell with measured pulsations. Over the radiophone the sound of rising snores was borne to the ears of the astonished crew.

See Autobiographical Note by the Author of "Moon Trap" on Page 127

"IS GOD DEAD?"

This is a natural question these days. But the answer is "No." Certainly not. Every thinking American knows that. But there is something radically wrong with our ideas of God. There must be, and there is. We have known for some time that this world never yet has had the Power of God disclosed to it. Theories of God . . . ? Yes, thousands of them. But no Power.

This is not as it should be. Right-thinking men and women everywhere should be able to use the Power of God against such mad world marauders as the Axis leaders. But they can't do it. Therefore, the truths of the powerful existence of God are not known. May we say to you with absolute assurance that there does exist, here and now, an invisible spiritual Power which is God, and which you may use any time you care to? We know whereof we speak. An abundance

of evidence has come to us, proving beyond a shadow of doubt that man can, here and now, draw upon a vast ocean of Power which is God.

We want you to know how to discover and use the Power of God. To help you find this Power, we will do everything in our power. Send us your name and address and we will send you enough free material to convince you that we know what we are talking about. If your experience is like that of scores of thousands of others, there will come into your life the most dazzling, scintillating Power you can ever know—the Power of God.

Send your name and address to "Psychiana" Inc., Dept. 211, Moscow, Idaho, and your free information will come to you as fast as we can get it in the mail. The address again—"Psychiana" Inc., Dept. 211, Moscow, Idaho. Copyright 1943, "Psychiana" Inc.

(Adv.)

SCIENTIFACTS

INCREDIBLE BUT TRUE

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

NOT only people are what they eat. For many years northern zoological parks have been puzzled over the fading plumage of the scarlet flamingos.

These birds should arrive from Florida all resplendent in their flaming plumage, but with each successive spring molt the new feathers would come in lighter in color. Until finally only an expert could tell the former brilliant-hued Florida birds from the white European flamingos.

Then came the dream of, shall we say, technicolor? The bird curator of the New York Zoological Park, Lee S. Crandall, figured out that the dried shrimp diet of his charges lacked vitamins and oils found in their natural diet of tiny shellfish. So he concocted a bizarre formula of grated carrots, sweet peppers, yeast, codliver oil, dried Mexican flies and other ingredients calculated to give color to plumage.

Did it work? Last spring, for the first time, the flaming flamingos showed up with an Easter dress of richly pink feathers. Not only this, but their European companions who had shared their diet all winter blossomed forth with the same hue. The diet makes the man, and the scarlet flamingos are once more in the pink.

Now if Du Pont chemists can only find a way to feed coal dust to some of these grayheaded old boys like your science editor. . . .

INSECT WINGS

CONTRARILY, science for long has had the theory that the iridescent sheen and color of the wings of insects is due to refraction of light—prismatic,

like the rainbow—instead of to the presence of actual color. But how?

And our new powerful prying eye of science, the electron microscope, has substantiated this theory. The research laboratories of the RCA Manufacturing Company took the wings of beetles and scales from wings of tropical butterflies and went to work in their study.

By delving down into the invisibly small, they have proven that insect wing color is due to the refraction of light from incredibly fine ridges and lines which break up the light into its spectrum colors in the way it is reflected from glass surfaces or finely rubbed metal plates.

The average width of these lines on a beetle's wing is 0.8 micron. On the butterfly scales it is much finer, being only 0.15 micron. For purposes of comparison, a micron is about one twenty-five thousandth of an inch. A fine human hair is about 25 microns in diameter.

As the holiday season is fast approaching, will some kind engraver use a diamond point and cut the fine lines of a red-and-green necktie on our shirt front?

VOLCANOS WHILE YOU WAIT

UP TO this minute nobody knows precisely what makes a volcano.

Down through the ages many interesting theories have been cooked up to account for them, from chimneys extending down into the earth's supposedly molten core to frictional stress from shifting rock strata. And perhaps a few mythological legends thrown in for good measure—such as the Grecian story of the origin of Mt. Aetna. Jupiter overcame Enceladus, one of the race of huge and superhuman giants, and placed the flaming mass on top of him to keep him quiet henceforth.

Recently, on a plain 300 miles north-

west of Mexico City, Dr. Frederick Pough of the American Museum of Natural History was privileged to see the birth of a volcano, from the first puff of smoke to the formation of a cone a hundred feet high in three days. It sim-



able proportions such as one part to two million parts of water, kills every germ of certain types within three hours.

The first gram of the pure stuff to be produced in this country cost six thousand dollars. A number of pharmaceutical firms have undertaken its production in recent months, and its present cost is about sixty dollars per gram. True, there are about thirty-one grams to the ounce, but there are more than twenty-eight thousand doses of penicillin to the ounce. The outlook for the future war against many types of disease is very hopeful. Has anybody a spare penicil? We want to write a poison pen letter to some strep and staph germs.

ply occurred on a level plain, and Dr. Pough was fortunate enough to be on hand to watch the process and take notes.

Until scientists have analyzed and figured the answers out, the bare fact remains that Mother Nature had a boil on her skin and erupted white hot lava to ease the condition.

This is the first time since 1759 that civilized man has witnessed the birth of a volcano, at which time a baby volcano was born on a Mexican plain. And in Mexico again, eh? Maybe there is something to the theory of hot chili peppers after all.

THE CHEMICAL DAVID

THE newest bombshell to explode in the world of organic chemistry is that of penicillin, the latest rival of the sulfa drugs. For the benefit of those who came late, be it known that penicillin is the newest and most potent disease-destroyer. It acts in much the same way as the sulfas, seems to do a better job, and shows less reaction on the patient.

This new ally of science and medicine gets its name from a common mold similar to the mold which appears on stale bread. Discovered by accident back in 1929 when Alexander Fleming, University of London bacteriologist, found a spot of the mold on a culture plate where he was growing bacteria, its properties have been quietly studied and investigated since.

The mold, even diluted to unbeliev-

FROG LEGS FOR CYCLOPS?

AT VARIOUS times in these columns we have reported on gargantuan mammals and reptiles of the several geologic ages. Comes now the latest flash from Texas, a state where they generally do big things in a big way. A distant avuncular relative of the frog has been discovered. That is, his fossilized remains have been exhumed. This enormous amphibian, estimated to have lived in Texas some 250 million years ago, had a skull more than two feet long and eighteen inches wide.

Although definitely identified as an amphibian, it had well-developed teeth and at least part of its skin was plated with scales. Anyway, it was an uncle to the frog, and what a fine pair of frog legs it could have yielded to a colossal troglodyte with a healthy appetite. But perhaps they didn't worry about meat rationing in those days.

TIRED LIGHT

HERE is a new theory about our expanding universe that you scientific-minded students can kick around for a bit. Instead of the star universes running away from us and gradually dying or coming unwound, Professor L. H. Thomas, of Ohio State University, says that he has worked out a satisfactory theory concerning the reddish glow of light from the more distant star clusters.

The dimming, reddish light—as though the stars were running away and burning out—is due, according to the professor, to a sort of “friction.” The light, coming to us from such illimitable distances, becomes weaker—tired—and thus its color turns reddish. As the light energy weakens, the more it sags toward the seventh color of the spectrum and turns reddish.

The friction is with the rubbing against so many other waves of light that the beam of a given star is buffeted



about until its vibrational energy is lessened. This kind of friction Professor Thomas calls electro-magnetic in nature.

And why shouldn't light get tired? Everything else does.

SPATIAL WIND

BELIEVE it or not, the ether of the universe is not in a state of inert quiescence. There are tremendous winds blowing through the frigid reaches of intergalactic space, a grand turbulence which far transcends any gale known on earth.

According to Dr. Walter S. Adams, director of the Mt. Wilson Observatory, who has been conducting measurements of the interstellar cloud masses in or bordering on the region of the Milky Way, these clouds are composed—not of hydrogen, but calcium vapor.

They are so extensive that light, traveling at its high speed of 186,000 miles per second, requires years to pass through them. And these enormous clouds are moving at speeds as high as ninety thousand miles per hour, or a thousand times faster than hurricanes.

These clouds are studied by their effects on the light of stars passing through them. When enough data has

been gathered, who knows, we may have wind maps of space to guide our spatial astrologers of tomorrow.

PAGE THE OLD RAIN MAKERS

THE unprecedented thundering and cannonading of global warfare with its thousands and thousands of tons of explosives being hurled against earth and sky bring to mind the old question of how much of an explosion is required to bring about a rainfall. In other words, just how does all this grim war thunder affect the weather?

The answer, according to L. A. Hawkins, the question-and-answer authority of the General Electric Science Forum, is—not a whit. Terrific as the explosive forces released in a heavy bombing raid or barrage may be, they are puny in comparison with the mighty forces that control the weather.

Never shall we control the weather, much less have any effect on it, until we are able to stop a mass of air comprising a hundred and ninety billion tons from going about its business as it sees fit.

Farewell, Epluvius, rainmaker of the ancients. What you need is a wind sock that will hold a few thousand cubic miles of air.

AT HOME—TOMORROW

SO MANY things for the future are coming out of this war that our imagination is staggered. Among other things, there will be glass-lined ovens, tiny-motored electrical appliances, all sorts of plastics, specially tinted window glasses, concealed lighting, air-conditioning that does away with exterior openings, built-in equipment, and pre-fabricated houses. And on top of this comes flyweight furniture.

This new idea, an offspring from plywood crew seats developed for war planes and which weigh but five pounds while capable of withstanding a ton weight, leads us to knock-down furniture of which enough to furnish a four-room house can be packed in a 5x5x8-foot box.

Some designers believe that all furni-

ture will be built-in, attached to the walls so as to leave floor space clear for movement and easy cleaning.

How nice! So we will open the card table and spill out the new plastic cards. We will turn on the air-conditioner and the concealed cold light. We will set



the automatic score recorder and switch on the television set for soft music.

Now if you will just draw up the four walls so you can sit down, we'll have a cozy little rubber—or should we say, plastic?—of bridge.

A NEW ASTRONOMICAL TOOL

KNOwn for a considerable number of years, Radar has come into its own during the present war. Briefly, it is a development of a radio device which can send out a signal and record the

return of the echo, as it were, mathematically computing the distance between the machine and its target.

Where it differs from radio particularly is that it can be focused and sent on a tight beam in a designated direction instead of scattering diffusely as do radio waves.

Dr. Orestes H. Caldwell, editor of *Electronic Industries*, has outlined one significant probable peacetime use of Radar. By equipping observatories with the instrument, a radar pulse can be directed at various heavenly bodies in the solar system and make accurate check of their distances, speeds and eccentricities.

Thus, the same beam that reported the presence of Japanese planes when they were still 135 miles distant from Pearl Harbor can report the arrival and departure of asteroids of greatly eccentric orbits.

Radar, which functions at the speed of light, may yet equip space liners of the future! Meanwhile, if we can just hook up the conversation of some of these fast-talking smoothies, perhaps we can establish two-way communication with Mars without waiting for a long sound time lag.

Who's afraid of the Heaviseid Layer?

More **THRILLS IN SCIENCE** Coming Next Issue!

Misery of

Piles Fought Easy Way In Few Minutes

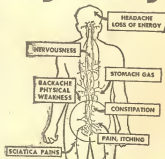
Did you ever have something like a real miracle in relief happen to you when you needed it most? Well, that's the way China-Roid's 3-way easing of Pile agonies seems to thousands who are now making this great discovery for themselves! Don't let tortures of Piles ruin your happiness, disposition and sap your nerve force! You've probably tried dozens of things, rectal ointments, etc., but until you've tried China-Roid you cannot know the worth-while relief you are missing.

Within a few minutes after the very first application, the doctor's prescription China-Roid usually starts fighting the symptoms of Piles in 3 ways: 1. Soothes and eases pain and itching. 2. Helps shrink sore, swollen tissues. 3. Promotes healing by comforting irritated membranes and alleviates nervousness due to Piles. China-Roid has helped thousands while they worked and enjoyed life in greater comfort.

Fight Nervousness

The irritation of Piles makes most people highly nervous and irritable because hundreds of tiny nerves radiate from the base of the spine and send messages of pain to various parts of the body and may contribute to symptoms such as headaches, backaches, constipation, sciatic leg pains and loss of energy. Any prolonged or recurrent pain saps vitality!

China-Roid comes with a special applicator making it easy to use with accuracy, and it contains five ingredients that work very fast. So get China-



Roid from your druggist today and fight those painful symptoms of Piles.

Guaranteed Trial Offer

China-Roid has proved so successful that it is offered under the positive guarantee of complete satisfaction or money back. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose, so get China-Roid from your druggist today and see for yourself how fast it works.

China-Roid
(Adv.)



Thecla, the last Amazon to wrestle with Pete Manx, fell sprawling

SWING YOUR LADY

By KELVIN KENT

Amazons Can't Stop Pete Manx When He Whizzes Away to the Land of Wild Women to Tame a Few Assorted Shrews!

PETE MANX was in the worst spot of his eventful life. Not even the undeniable splendor of his costume had power to lift his drooping spirits. And that showed pretty well how sunk Manx felt.

He fingered the carnation in the lapel of his cutaway and grimaced miserably. Then he craned his neck to look out the back window of the taxi. No sign of

pursuit. Only upper Broadway, sweltering under an Indian summer sun.

"I been run out of Cowper, Kansas, for selling patent medicine," he reflected, "and that circus riot in Elk's Tooth wasn't no bed of roses. But I never came up against a dame like Margie before. Oh, gosh. Wish I was dead. What a life. Maybe she's trailing me now." Pete Manx shuddered

convulsively. If there was only some place to hide. . . .

"Yipe!" said Mr. Manx, and bent forward as though he had been kicked in the stomach. "Doc Mayhem! That's it. Hey, I don't want to go to the East River. Changed my mind. Uptown, and fast!"

He gave the driver an address.

Ten minutes later he burst into the home-and-laboratory of Doctor Mayhem, wild-eyed and disheveled. "Doc!" he yowled. "Hey! I need help, but quick. Where are you?"

A burly, red-faced man with a paunch and the expression of an embittered gorilla appeared, puffing at a cigar and staring. "Pete? Mayhem isn't here. He'll be back pretty soon."

Pete Manx scowled at Professor Aker, who was an old enemy of his. Then he jumped nervously as an automobile horn blew in the street outside.

"I can't wait," he chattered. "That dame may come after me with an axe. Prof, you know how to work the Doc's time machine, don't you?"

Aker nodded. "Of course."

"Then you gotta use it on me. I need a hideout. And right now."

A HOPEFUL gleam came into the scientist's eye. "Trouble with the police? Arson? Murder?"

"Lay off," Pete Manx muttered. "I ain't in any mood for gags. Look at me. What do you see?"

"A low-grade moron," Aker began, but he was interrupted.

"These duds," Manx explained. "Cut-away, carnation, silk topper. Margie made me put 'em on. They're for the wedding."

"Wedding?"

"I tell you, that dame had me enchanted. I met up with her at Coney. She's a snake charmer. First thing I knew, she started treating me as if I was one of her snakes. The strength on that frill!" Pete Manx shivered.

Aker was grinning. "Go on."

"I dunno how I got into this scrape, anyhow. I shot her out once or twice and then she decides we'll get married.

Ugh, the way she looks at a guy. Like needles. She figures we'll be married and I'll spiel for her act." Pete Manx laughed hollowly.

The professor seemed amused. "Why not tell her no?"

"Look," said Mr. Manx, "let's say you're in a cage with Gargantua, or maybe a giant python. Talking don't do much good. All you can do is run like blazes. And Margie's got detectives trailing me. I tried to skip out four times—and the last time she—talked to me." Manx gulped. "You never been talked to by a snake charmer with gimlets for eyes and a couple of baby boas twined around her neck. I argued. I begged. I said I'd make a punk husband. 'I'll mould you into shape,' she says. And today's the wedding."

Aker was chuckling. "I'll be your best man, if you like."

"Why don't the Doc come back?" Mr. Manx groaned. "Margie's been trailing me all day. First thing I know, she'll come busting in and drag me off to the parson."

"I don't see how you can get out of it."

"Well, I do. She can't marry me if I'm not here. I want the Doc to let me use his time machine. Then when Margie gets here, she'll think I'm a stiff. You know how the gadget works."

"Of course," said Aker, seeing a chance to get off a little lecture. "It releases the ego from the body and sends it back to the Central Time Consciousness—the hub of the time-wheel. Then centrifugal force shoots the *id* to another era, where it inhabits the body of someone who was alive at that time. The—"

"Oh-oh," said Pete. "Here she is. In a taxi. With her snakes, too. Omigosh. I'm sunk." He began to chew the carnation in hopeless frenzy.

Aker came to a sudden decision. "I'll fix it, Pete. I know how to use the time machine. Come along."

"Y—you will?" Pete Manx sounded incredulous. "Prof, you ain't quite the heel I thought. But we gotta work fast." He shot into the laboratory like

a torpedo and esconced himself in a wired metal chair in one corner. "Shoot the works!"

Aker was hurriedly manipulating switches and dials. "It won't take long. And I'll get rid of Margie."

"That's your story," Pete Manx remarked, bouncing up and down in the chair. "You don't know Margie. That dame'd follow me to Frisco and drag me back by the ears. But she can't follow me where I'm going. Make it a nice safe time, Prof. I don't want to meet up with Lucrezia Borgia again — or Merlin!"

There was a gleam of wicked amusement in Aker's eyes. Pete Manx saw it too late. The Professor chuckled, "You'll have a rest cure where you're going. Besides, I've always wondered how much truth there was in the legends of the—"

He knifed a switch.

"—the Amazons."

Swoosh!

THERE was a crackle of electricity as the time-circuit closed. Pete Manx stiffened momentarily; then he fell back in the chair, jaw dropping. He resembled a corpse.

Aker was laughing like mad. . . .

Pete Manx's ego shot away with a whizz, caromed off a stray century, arcked toward Ancient Greece, and came to rest in the body of a small, meek-looking little man who was desperately trying to remove somebody's sandaled foot from his face.

Confusion reigned. It was extremely hot, and there was a great deal of yelling going on, together with a metallic clanking that puzzled Pete Manx a great deal. Also, he smelled blood.

With some difficulty, he removed the foot from his face and heaved at the heavy weight that was bearing him down. Finally his head popped into view. Apparently he had been buried under a pile of—*ulp*—corpses.

They wore armor, and were all indeed dead. Other mounds and individual stiffs lay here and there on the broad plain. A battle was just ending.

Men on horses were high-tailing it frantically, fleeing from their successful attackers. There was something decidedly odd about the victors of the battle. Not even armor could disguise their feminine figures.

A horse cantered by, and Pete Manx automatically captured it. He was in a backwash of the battle, and nobody noticed him, for the nonce. Should he mount and flee? But where?

The problem was solved for him by the approach of a burly, red-bearded man who crawled out from beneath a bush.

"You are indeed a faithful orderly," he informed Manx. "I am sorry I beat you for failing to polish my sword this morning. Well, if we meet again, I shall be kinder."

With that, he leaped astride the horse, drove spurs deep, and galloped away, leaving Manx with one arm extended in futile protest.

Orderly, eh? Well, at any rate, he now knew what side he was on—the wrong side. Since there were no more horses in evidence—except, Pete Manx thought with ill-timed and atrocious humor, the ones that were *hors de combat*—it would be well to hide. With this in mind, he dived for the nearest pile of corpses.

Hoofs clattered. "Ha, dog!" said a shrill, impassioned voice, and the point of a spear pricked the only visible portion of Pete Manx. "Now you die with your comrades."

"Guk!" Manx cried incoherently, writhing aside to meet the cold blue stare of an Amazon woman astride her battle charger. "Hold everything! I ain't in this."

"Aye, hold," a new voice broke in, deeper and more commanding. "He is no warrior, Clio, by his trappings. 'Twere shame to slay a mere slave."

"As you like, Thecla," Clio grunted. Pete Manx saw, with a sudden shock of horror, that the blue-eyed, dark-haired Amazon bore a strong resemblance to Margie. There were, however, no snakes, but Clio's muscles were enough to make anyone shudder.

Thecla was no weakling, either, but she was better proportioned. She was a big, brawny, red-haired wench, with cat-like green eyes and a snub nose. Now she was eying Pete with an interest that boded the man no good.

"The battle's over," she remarked. "Those marauding Greeks won't trouble us again for a while. Take this prize of war back to my tent, Clio. He is passing fair."

Pete Manx reddened to the roots of his hair. "Now listen!" he objected hotly. "I got some rights."

Clio interrupted him. She picked him up by the back of his tunic and flung him across her saddle. Pete Manx writhed and yelled in futile resentment.

HE QUIETED suddenly when the point of a dagger dug into his spine.

"Men should know their places," Clio said, "and keep to them. One more move from you and I'll drag you behind my horse."

"Don't harm him," Thecla urged. " 'Twould be sad to mar his sweet face."

Pete Manx nearly fainted with horror. This could not be happening to him! Out of the frying-pan with a vengeance!

Thecla galloped away. With an annoyed grunt, Clio cantered in the opposite direction, muttering to herself. "The Queen's too kind to her men. The best way is to beat them hard and often. Hold still, you miserable little worm. Or I'll take pleasure in stepping on you. Hah!"

"B-but—" Pete Manx gurgled.

"Silence!" The dagger drove deeper. Mr. Manx said no more.

The camp of the Amazons lay in a broad valley, near a good-sized stream bordered by groves of olive and oak. It seemed to be a semi-permanent encampment, a base established to guard the frontiers. Queen Thecla, ruler of all the Amazons, divided her time between the main city, far to the north, and such outposts as this.

The scene was idyllic. The gaily-colored pavilions were bright against the

green meadows, and the blue sky of Greece was a canopy overhead. It reflected with sparkles of sunshine in the huge tub in which the unfortunate Pete Manx was washing clothes.

"A fine thing," he reflected bitterly. "Wish I had a bottle of my old Manx Cleansall. Hah." The soap was not of the best-rate quality, and Manx was forced to use a good deal of elbow-grease. Ruefully he contemplated his reddened knuckles.

"It ain't fair," he growled. "Blast Professor Aker, anyway. I hope Margie stuffed one of her snakes down his throat. Well, at least I'm still a bachelor."

"Not for long," said a cold voice. It was Clio, swaggering toward him, her hard blue eyes unpleasantly malicious. "Queen Thecla will wed you as soon as she's back. And that will be soon. Come along; she won't be pleased to find you at this task. But you'll get a meaner one if you try to escape again."

"I just wanted to take a walk," Mr. Manx explained, not hopefully. The brawny Amazon grinned and touched her dagger-hilt.

"By Artemis, you'd best not wander far from camp. Our archers have sharp arrows. Come."

Pete Manx was only too glad to relinquish his messy task. Later, however, he changed his mind, when he found himself in one of the pavilions, attended by several masculine slaves armed with strigils, ointments, combs, brushes, and perfumes. Manx felt like a Pekingese the day before a dog-show.

"Hey!" he objected passionately. "Don't smear that goo on me. It smells."

" 'Tis myrrh," said one of the slaves. "The Queen likes its scent."

"Well, I don't," yelled Mr. Manx and retreated into a corner of the tent. "A little after-shave lotion is my speed. But that's all."

Hearing the commotion, Clio appeared, looking annoyed.

"What's wrong here? What? Oh, he doesn't, eh?" She drew her dagger and moved cat-footed toward the worried Mr. Manx. "There's no time to

waste. Thecla will be here soon, and you must be ready for her."

SHE spoke further and profanely to Pete Manx, reminding him of an Army top-kick he once knew. Presently the slaves continued their work, while Clio went outside with a final threat.

Pete Manx writhed. Yet he knew it was wisest to play along, for the while, till he got at least a small break. So his beard was combed and curled luxuriantly, odorous perfumes smeared on him, and his hair anointed with the Grecian equivalent of bear-grease. Eventually he staggered to a couch of furs and collapsed, moaning faintly. He had just looked in a mirror.

"I ain't neat," he murmured.

"You will please the Queen," said one of the slaves, a meek little man with shifty eyes and a flat dish-face. "That is always wise, Zeno."

"Zeno?" Pete Manx looked up. "My name's—uh—Petros Mancos." He employed an alias he had used before in the past.

The other smiled furtively. "You do not remember me, Antigonus? But it is wise of you to use a false name, Zeno. If your real one were known here, you would be tortured to death."

Pete Manx swallowed. "I expected this," he said, glaring bitterly at nothing. "Everything happens to me. I'm allergic to trouble. So I'm in the body of a guy named Zeno, and he's a public enemy." He gripped Antigonus' arm. "Now look, pal. Ever heard of amnesia?"

"No," said the other. "Who is she?"

Pete Manx explained. "So there it is," he ended. "I got a bump on the head and now I can't remember anything. See? I gotta know the set-up."

Antigonus glanced around at the other slaves, who were watching interestedly. "They won't betray you. Well, years ago we were in a distant Amazon camp, far to the west, both of us were slaves. You're sure you don't remember? Well, we belonged to a warrior-woman named Urganilla, called the Bear-Wrestler."

"Ulp," Pete remarked. "G-go on."

"You betrayed that camp to the Greeks. Only a few escaped, Urganilla among them. She, I think, is the only Amazon who would recognize you. And if she does, of course, you will be torn to bits. Or perhaps sliced at with swords," Antigonus ended reflectively. "I'm not quite sure."

"Where is this Bear-Wrestler?"

"In the city. But she's due in camp in a day or so. When she arrives, you will die, I suppose. It is sad."

"Sad!" Pete Manx gulped. "I got tears in my eyes already. Look, Antigonus, I gotta get out of here, double quick."

"You can't. The guards are always on the alert. It is impossible to escape from the camp."

Manx shut his eyes and thought hard. Obviously he was in a spot. But he had been in trouble before, and his resources had not failed him. Despite their muscles and weapons, these Amazons did not seem especially bright. Perhaps he could outwit them and escape.

Where? Manx wasn't sure. But, after questioning Antigonus further, he realized that to remain in the camp till Urganilla arrived would be fatal. For the Amazon would recognize him and immediately denounce him as a traitor.

After that—ugh!

His reverie was interrupted by the arrival of Queen Thecla. The red-haired Amazon strode into the tent, chin arrogantly lifted, and her gaze found Manx.

"Ah," she said. "You are more beautiful than I had thought."

MANX looked desperate.

"Now look," he said. "I ain't beautiful."

"Be not afraid," the Queen murmured. "You will not be harmed. Now I must go. There are reports to be dictated, and plans to be made. Later we must have a friendly talk." With that she departed, leaving Pete Manx to claw at his curled beard.

"She likes you," Antigonus smiled.

"Shut up," howled Mr. Manx, crimson with futile fury. "I'm no lap-dog. I'm

no gigolo. I'm getting out of here."

It was, however, easier said than done. Antigonus and the other slaves were friendly enough, and willing to help, so long as they were not involved in trouble. At nightfall Pete Manx slipped away through an olive grove and headed for the hills.

Some time later he came back, unwillingly, across the back of a horse ridden by an Amazon guard. Queen Thecla was considerate but firm. She lectured Manx on the uselessness of attempting escape, and told him that the next time it happened, he would be whipped soundly. Then she patted the miserable man's cheek, gave him a sweetmeat, and sent him back to the other slaves, chattering inarticulately.

"I told you so," Antigonus said helpfully.

Pete Manx barked sharply and went off to brood in a corner. After a while he got an idea. He came back to the group of slaves.

"Look," he said, "I saw a movie once about Amazons—"

"Movie?"

"Let it lay. I got a hunch. How'd you boys like to get the upper hand on these Amazons?" He explained at length. His words were greeted with surprisingly little enthusiasm.

"But we like it this way," Antigonus objected. "We don't work hard, we don't have to fight or run risks, and we get plenty to eat." Well, obviously only the weakest specimens of the Greeks were ever captured by Amazons. The strong ones either died in battle, or escaped to fight again.

"Where's your self-respect?" Mr. Mann said sharply. "Woman's place is in the home. Equal rights for everybody, that's what we want. Why should men have to do all the drudgery? Now listen—" He was a persuasive talker. He pointed out the advantages of conquering the Amazons.

"Conquering them?"

"Peacefully. Propaganda, that's the stuff. Passive resistance. Equal rights. A man oughta be the master in his own tent." He talked on, smoothly and con-

vincingly. There was no point in explaining all his plans, of course. Equal rights would not be enough. What Pete Manx was working for was a complete reversal of the Amazonian social scheme. Men, not women, must be the masters.

It could be done. Pete Manx had read stories, and seen a film or two, that dealt with exactly the same subject. A guy was captured by the Amazons, got busy, and pretty soon the apple-cart was upset, and the women were doing the washing. That was what Pete Manx wanted. It was the only way he could save his own life.

If the Amazons were still in charge when Urganilla arrived and denounced him, it would be just too bad. But if the women were powerless, the men in charge, he would be safe.

It looked like the long way around; yet it was the only way. For by this time Manx was convinced of the impossibility of escape. His job was to persuade the slaves to help him.

"We'll be whipped," Antigonus objected.

"Not if we play smart. I got some tricks up my sleeve that ought to help. If we get the Amazons worried enough, the war's half won. Boring from within, see?"

"No," said Antigonus.

PETE MANX made a large gesture. "Just leave it to me." He was not too pleased with his companions. They did not seem to have enough backbone. But he had to use the tools that lay ready to his hand. "I'll try psychology. The Amazons are plenty superstitious. Suppose their goddess—"

"Artemis?"

"Yeah—Artemis. Suppose she says that men have to be the masters, and puts a curse on the Amazons till the change is made?"

Antigonus blinked. "One cannot make a goddess speak."

Pete Manx smiled happily. "Wait and see. She's the moon-goddess, eh? Well, maybe I can make a moon—"

He brooded briefly over storage bat-

teries, electric lights, and a public-address system.

Pretty complicated, but he would try what he could.

"We'll want some signs painted. Now listen . . ."

It was dawn before Pete Manx slept. And by that time his plans were made. It would take several days at least, he knew, to prepare his materials. Even then, something might conceivably go amiss. It usually did. Yet Pete Manx's round face bore a seraphic smile as he dropped into audible slumber on a pile of silks and furs.

The war was over, for the nonce—at least until the next attack. There was little for the male slaves to do. Thus Manx found it not too difficult to enlist helpers. He worked with them under the noses of the Amazons, who, of course, did not know what it was all about.

"A big spotlight will help a lot," he informed Antigonos. "And that means electricity—batteries. Simple ones. Zinc, copper, and sulphuric acid. I can make zinc—let's see—by distilling it with carbon. Only I need the ore."

Antigonos scratched his head. "Zinc is alloyed with copper to make brass. I know that."

Pete Manx grinned delightedly. "You've got some? Swell!"

Sulphuric acid was not difficult, either. There were two ways of obtaining it that Pete Manx could employ: he could distil alum, or he could burn sulphur with saltpetre. He chose the easier method, with satisfactory results. In the end he had several crude but workable batteries, consisting chiefly of two rods—one of zinc, one of copper—immersed in dilute sulphuric acid. Wire was somewhat more difficult, but Manx finally drew some through a die he laboriously drilled.

Meanwhile, with the aid of Antigonos, he organized the slaves. It was, necessarily, a whispering campaign. But the Amazons had such a contempt for men that none of the warrior-women suspected what was going on.

"Dopes," Mr. Manx remarked scorn-

fully to himself. "This is gonna be easy."

He sought out Antigonos. "Know what creosote is?" he wanted to know.

"No. Is it something to eat?"

Manx shook his head. "Not exactly. Never mind. I'll just look around a bit."

He experimented with various bushes, burning them and distilling the vapors. The sulphuric acid helped, too. At last he had several jugs filled with a deceptively mild-looking fluid that had a smoky, curious odor. Some of this he supplied to each of the men assigned to laundry duty.

"Just drop it in the tubs," he instructed. "That's all."

The initial step was to start the Amazons wondering. After a consultation with Antigonos, he managed to swipe Queen Thecla's sword and spent a difficult night electroplating it. The next morning when the Amazon ruler unsheathed the blade at the pagan matin prayer, every eye was riveted on the weapon. It had apparently turned to copper, except for a line of Greek letters that read crisply: "The curse of Artemis on the Amazons."

A GASP of amazement went up. Those who were close enough to make out the message whispered it to their neighbors. Thecla looked worried. And like wildfire the story ran through the camp.

The curse of Artemis! But why—how—

They were not long in finding out. Those Amazons who had donned clean clothing that day began to twitch uneasily. They scratched futilely at their armor. Groups of them went down to the river to bathe.

It did no good. The strange malady persisted. The brawny Clio nearly dislocated a shoulder trying to scratch her back. Moreover, the slaves who had done the washing the day before all had an angry rash about their wrists.

Pete Manx thought happily about creosote and satisfactory imitations of it, and chuckled to himself as he

watched Clio frantically writhing in her armor. He ducked for cover as the Amazon glared at him and snatched up a convenient spear.

There were other manifestations that day. Pete Manx had seen to it. The horses could not be ridden, since their trappings had been well soaked in an irritating but harmless compound the ingenious Mr. Manx had prepared. Since horses were sacred to Artemis, the Amazons felt more and more uneasy as the day wore on.

He had even made use of the time-honored dribble glass, boring tiny holes in metal goblets, so that when the Amazons drank, the result was far from neat.

It was sound psychology, for the warrior women, despite their habits, were vain as peacocks, and wore gorgeous trappings. Quantities of these were ruined, and a great many tempers lost in the process. Pete Manx wandered about, with a blandly innocent eye, watching the steady demoralization of the Amazons.

He did not want to go too far. He was merely breaking the ground for tonight's *coup de grace*. Even so, Clio sought him out and showed him the point of her sword.

"Do you know anything about this?" she snarled.

"I?" Pete Manx was the picture of injured innocence. "Why, what's wrong?" But it was quite obvious what was wrong. On Clio's sword-blade was superimposed a Greek sentence that was, to say the least, rather insulting. The Amazon, purple with fury, cursed Manx in terse monosyllables.

"If you weren't the Queen's favorite," she ended, gripping the sword-hilt, "I'd slice you into food for vultures. Miserable worm of a man." She looked more than ever like Margie.

There was a shriek from a nearby pavilion. Queen Thecla appeared, a golden jar in one hand and a look of anguish on her face. She was preceded by a strong and unpleasant odor.

"What now?" Clio inquired grumpily.

"My perfumes," Thecla gasped. "My most precious ointments—ambergris, at-

tar of roses. Smell this." She thrust the jar at Clio, who was rash enough to sniff. Both Amazons turned a delicate pea-green. Even Pete Manx, who had spent a few hours mixing iron pyrites with other nauseous chemicals, gulped unhappily.

"It—does smell," Clio said inadequately.

"It's the curse," Thecla whispered. "Artemis is avenging herself on us. But why?"

The other Amazon shrugged and scratched her flank. "I never heard of a curse like this. Lightning I can understand. But smells and itches! 'Tis more like the work of a mischievous satyr."

The Queen hurled the golden jar into the river. "We shall sacrifice to Artemis when the moon rises, and beg for forgiveness. Hera help us!"

Pete Manx, who had retreated into the shadow of a bush, grinned diabolically. All was going even better than he had planned.

HE MADE a quick trip of inspection to the sacred grove, where he examined the altar of Artemis and checked the batteries and improvised searchlight he had set up there. There was nothing amiss. He was ready.

Minor manifestations continued all that day. By sundown the Amazons were in a state of nervous exhaustion. By moonrise they were fit to be tied. Matters were scarcely helped when the Queen, drawing out her golden crown from its jeweled chest, discovered that the diadem had apparently turned to some dull, grayish metal. Luckily for Pete Manx, she did not scrape through the plating to the solid gold beneath.

In a body the Amazons trooped toward the grove. They gathered there before the altar, while their worried ruler sacrificed to Artemis. Nothing happened.

The silence was broken. From the direction of the camp came a loud chant, confused and unmusical, in which could be traced some vague resemblance to "Mademoiselle from Armentières." It

made, at any rate, a stirring marching song.

The Amazons stirred uneasily. What in the name of Hera was this? An unsightly rabble of slaves—men—pouring toward the grove, shouting, singing, and carrying banners inscribed with strange and fantastic devices.

"'Equal rights for slaves!'" Thecla gasped. "'Suffrage for men! 'We want the vote!' Are they gone mad?" Her eyes had widened with amazement.

The banners were plain to read in the bright moonlight. They demanded recognition.

"No more K.P.," said one. Another went into more detail. "Are we mice or men? We want the four freedoms!" A third declared: "We'll wear the greaves in our families!"

"They are mad," Clio said. "Shall I gather a few warriors and drive them back to camp?"

But by this time the men were within the grove. They came to a halt, milling around in an uncertain fashion. Abruptly a blazing light flashed out of the darkness in the trees. It fell full on the altar of the goddess.

Ventriloquism was only one of Pete Manx's accomplishments. Lurking in the gloom, he cupped his hands to his mouth and spoke.

"Gather 'round, folks! I come here to instruct you—Amazons and gentlemen! Just a bit closer, there. Now—" Antigonus had been previously instructed.

"'Tis Artemis" he shouted. "'Tis the goddess!"

Clio grew rather pale.

"It is not meet for men to be in the sacred grove," she said. "Drive them away."

"Hold!" Pete Manx's disguised voice shrilled through the clearing. He swung the guide-wires to the searchlight so that its beam found Clio. "My message is for all."

"She has brought the moon down from the skies," Thecla whispered.

There was a pause. Then the Queen bowed before the altar. "We give you worship, Great Huntress. Why are you

angry with us?"

Pete Manx almost purred. This was too easy. He took a deep breath.

"It ain't right. It is not meet for women to rule men."

"It has always been thus among the Amazons," Clio cried.

"Then it's gotta be changed," Pete Manx said doggedly. "I'm your goddess and what I say goes. This set-up ain't natural. It's all right for women to have their rights, but making the men your slaves ain't—is not meet."

Thecla spoke unbelievably. "You would have us live as the Greeks do?"

"Sure," Pete Manx told her, switching the searchlight again. "Equal rights. The women gotta stay home and mind the kids. The men—er—make a living."

THE Queen drew a long, shuddering breath and glanced around at the ranks of frozen astounded Amazons.

"We obey, O goddess," she whispered. "If this is why you put your curse upon us, we obey."

"Swear it," Pete Manx said inexorably.

The Queen dropped on her knees, as did the other warrior women. But before she could speak, there was an interruption. With a clatter of racing hoofs, a charger thundered into the clearing, carrying on its back an Amazon who bore a rather grim resemblance to Tony Galento.

"What?" the woman bellowed. "Amazons on their knees?"

"Urganilla!" Clio cried. "'Tis Artemis who speaks to us."

Urganilla! Pete Manx's knees turned to castanets. This was the woman who knew him as a traitor, the one who would denounce him at sight. A fine time for her to arrive!

The war-charger stepped about nervously.

"Time enough for the goddess later," Urganilla roared. "I have ridden hard and fast to bring news. The Greeks have rallied and will be upon us by midday tomorrow. We must march to meet them or they will fall upon us here in the camp."

Clio's sword whipped out, but Queen

Thecla struck down the other's arm. "Nay, Artemis has spoken! We are no longer the rulers here. By the goddess's command, we must go to our tents. 'Tis the men who must sally forth to fight the Greeks."

She strode forward, extending her sword, hilt-first, to the shrinking Antigonous. "Here. This shall be yours."

"B-but!" stuttered Antigonous. "Your Majesty, we cannot fight."

"You must. Else the Greeks will slaughter us all. It is the divine command."

The men dropped their banners and wailed in horror. Above the tumult rose Antigonous's terrified voice.

"Nay, we have no wish to rule. We are content as we were. It was that slave Petros Mancos who bent us to his wishes. We d-don't want equal rights. Oh, your Majesty, please let us go back to our tents and do the washing as we've always done."

"Petros Mancos!" There was fury in Clio's voice. "I suspected him of trouble-making. Where is he now?"

Antigonous was spared the necessity of answering. Urganilla's horse, frightened by the commotion, danced over to the altar and tried to mount it. The searchlight swung wildly as flying hoofs jerked at concealed wires. The glaring beam swept in an arc, and, as though guided by some malevolent demon, rested on the shrinking figure of Pete Manx, cowering in the lower branches of an olive tree.

"Petros Mancos!" It was Clio who spoke, and in no friendly voice.

"Nay," Urganilla bellowed. "That is not his name. That coward slave is Zeno, who once betrayed us to the Greeks. I promised then that I would tear out his heart and eat it. *A-argh!*" With that, she hurled herself from the horse's back and plunged like a berserk gorilla toward Pete Manx.

There was no time for thought. Automatically Pete Manx jerked at a wire, and the searchlight's beam vanished. In the sudden darkness, he descended from the olive tree and took to his heels. Behind him he heard a thunderous crash

and a roar of searing oaths. There was tumult.

"Find him," Clio shouted. "Throw a cordon around the camp. Search the tents. Warn the sentries. We shall slay him together, Urganilla."

"Oh, gosh," Pete Manx gasped as he fled for his life. "This is the worst yet. What a spot." Impartially he cursed Professor Aker, Margie, the Amazons, and Fate.

PINE torches flared. The camp was a riot of activity. The men were cowering in their tents, horrified at the result of their abortive rebellion. The women went raging about, swords bared, keen eyes searching for sight of Mr. Manx.

That worthy was high in an oak tree, sharing his quarters with a disinterested owl. He had already tried to pass alert sentries, and escaped capture only by the skin of his teeth. He was safe on his precarious perch till daylight. Then anything could happen.

"Think, brain," Pete Manx admonished himself. "Quick, go to town. I've gotta figure something out, and fast."

Then inspiration came. Pete Manx let out a subdued whoop of joy that made the owl contemplate him curiously. With a quick glance around, he descended from the oak and stealthily slipped off into the gloom.

There was a way, a desperate one, but it was the only chance Pete Manx had. If it worked—he might manage to save his skin.

Twenty minutes later the searchlight again blazed out on the clearing in the sacred grove. An Amazon saw it, then another. One by one and two by two the perspiring, panting warriors hurried off to investigate.

They found Pete Manx sitting on the altar, swinging his legs and grinning happily.

"Wait," said an Amazon, seizing her companion's arm. "Urganilla will wish to kill the slave herself. He cannot escape."

Pete Manx seemingly had no wish to escape. He waited till Queen Thecla

and Clio had appeared, and then leaped nimbly to the ground. In the distance the bellowing of Urganilla was growing louder. Someone had told her that the culprit was found.

"It is no use to throw yourself on my mercy," Thecla said coldly. "You must die."

"Let me slay him," Clio urged.

"Urganilla shall have that pleasure. For his blasphemy he deserves death."

"Well, here she is," Clio said, smiling in a pleased fashion.

Urganilla burst into view, roared, and made for Pete Manx, sword flashing. Pete Manx summoned all his courage.

"Halt!" he yelled.

Automatically the Amazon slowed down. Manx followed up his advance.

"Listen," he said. "This ain't fair. I don't mind a fight, but that dame's got a sword."

Urganilla laughed like a hyena. "With my bare hands I shall crush you. I need no sword." She hurled it away.

Pete Manx nodded, glancing around the ring of Amazons. "Fair enough. You ladies think you're pretty tough. But you never run up against a real man before. If you ain't afraid of me, Urganie, how about a wrestling match?"

Someone laughed. Even the giantess could not repress a grin.

"Puny shrimp! Aye, we wrestle. As you like. No one has ever challenged me and lived."

Pete Manx looked at Thecla. "How about it? If I win, can I go free?"

The Queen nodded. "Aye, poor fool, if you win."

And with that the female gorilla rushed at Pete Manx.

There was a confused tangle, a shriek of agony from Urganilla, and the lady landed flat on her back near the altar. Mr. Manx brushed off his sleeve and sighed in a bored fashion.

The Amazons gasped.

Urganilla bounced up.

"Yaah!" she bellowed. "By Zeus, Hero, Apollo and all the devils of Hades, I shall eat your heart for this!"

She looked as if she meant it.

Instead, she described an arc that ended at the foot of a gnarled oak. Urganilla twitched a few times and then lay still. There was blank silence.

Pete Manx yawned. "Anybody else?" he inquired. "One at a time, of course. That'll make it last longer."

Clio accepted the offer. Grinning with fury, she leaped for Manx. Then, suddenly, she screamed at the top of her voice and almost turned a backward somersault, landing heavily on her back.

She did not offer to get up.

"Well, I'm open to offers," Pete Manx remarked. "Winner take all. Who wants to wrestle?"

An Amazon glanced at Thecla for permission, which was given with a nod. She landed on top of Clio. Another tried her luck. Then another. None of them had better luck.

Thecla was the last. She, too, uttered a piercing scream and fell sprawling. By the time she revived, the other Amazons were sitting quietly in a group, staring at Pete Manx. The Queen, gulping, unsheathed her sword and held it out hilt-first to the man.

"Forgive us," she said unsteadily. "We did not recognize you in mortal form, O Zeus. Loose no more lightnings upon us. Only tell us how we can serve you and atone for our blindness."

"Forget it," Pete Manx said generously. "Just see it don't happen again, that's all. We'll let bygones be bygones. You trot out and drive off the Greeks, and we'll call it quits."

"As you command," Thecla said humbly, and all the Amazons crawled off backward, dragging with them the unconscious bodies of Urganilla and Clio. Pete Manx heaved a deep sigh.

"Women!" he said bitterly.

Woosh!

HE WAS, of course, back in the laboratory, sitting in the time-machine chair and looking up into the massive red face of Professor Aker. The scientist appeared rather repentant.

"Well," said Pete Manx. "A fine pal you turned out to be."

"I couldn't resist the temptation,"

Aker explained, helping the other stand up on cramped legs. "Besides, I've always been curious about the Amazons. It worked out all right, I see—eh?"

"No thanks to you." Pete Manx massaged aching arms. "Oh-oh! I almost forgot. What about Margie?"

Aker fingered a slight discoloration under one eye. "She gave me a—uh—mouse, I believe it is termed. An extraordinary woman. I showed her your body and said you were dead, but she didn't believe it. She's marching up and down outside the house now, with two snakes around her neck."

"That's Margie, all right." Pete Manx adjusted his tie.

The Professor coughed. "I'm curious to know what happened to you among the Amazons, but that can wait. After meeting this—this Margie, I can't help sympathizing with you. The woman has a remarkably strong will. If you care to leave by the rear fire escape, just open that window, over there."

"No, thanks." Mr. Manx whistled a few bars of a popular melody. "I'm in no hurry. Let Margie wait a while. Want me to tell you just what happened?"

"By all means. Here, have a cigar."

Pete Manx relaxed in a comfortable chair and started talking. Half an hour later he threw away the butt of his second cigar.

"And that's all. I ain't so dumb, Prof. Mrs. Manx's little boy can always get along."

Aker stared at him, fascinated. "How you do these things I don't know." He hesitated. "One point puzzles me. I never knew you were a wrestler. How did you manage that? Ju-jitsu?"

PETE MANX preened himself. "Brain-work was all. When those Amazons tried to wrestle me, they got a shock. A big one. I had wires up my sleeve."

"What do you mean?"

"Ever see the Electric Woman in a circus? She's got a couple of flashlight batteries in her armpits, and wires running down inside her sleeves. Touch her hand and you get a jolt. Well, I had my batteries and wire all ready, so I just found some stuff to insulate my sandals, and when the Amazons touched the wires in my hands, they got enough voltage to knock 'em endwise. A cinch." Pete Manx finished, arose and waved casually at Aker. "Be seeing you, Prof."

"But Margie," the scientist said, suddenly reminded. "You're not going out the front door."

"Margie ain't so bad. Just a clinging vine, compared to Urganilla. I'll just stop in at the radio store next door, before seeing her. Then me and Margie will have a little talk. Thanks for everything, pal." With this cryptic remark, Pete Manx departed.

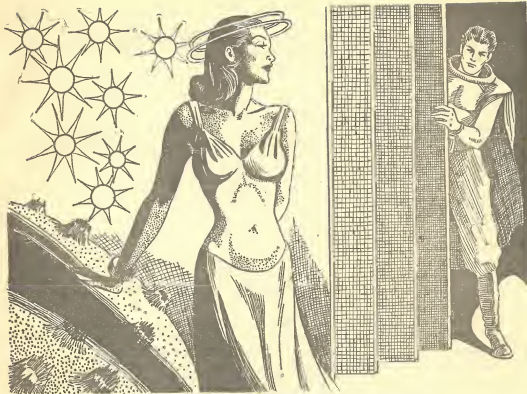
Professor Aker remained motionless till the sound of a feminine shriek reached his ears. Then he hastily lumbered to the front room and drew back a window-curtain.

Margie was sitting on the sidewalk, her mouth wide open, and an expression of blank astonishment in her eyes. Two snakes, tied into a neat bowline, lay motionless beside her.

And Pete Manx was swaggering down the street, the silk hat tilted at a rakish angle, while he whistled "Mademoiselle from Armentières" with an air of gay and jubilant triumph.



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Near the doorway stood Diana, her eyes fixed tenderly upon Harrigan

SPACE COMMAND

By ROBERT ARTHUR

After Fighting a Rebellious Bucko Mate and His Mutinous Crew Aboard a Rocket Ship, Captain Dan Harrigan Makes A Forced Landing in Hades Valley, Venus, and Proves That A Scientific Skipper Has Advantages Over a Roughneck!

CHAPTER I

Accident on Venus

WITH swift strokes of his pen, Captain Dan Harrigan, Space Rocket *Jupiter*, finished the curt note he was writing.

—I therefore request that, effective immediately, my resignation be accepted.

He signed it Daniel Harrigan with a bold, uncompromising flourish, blotted it, and sealed it in an envelope for immediate delivery to the Port Director as soon as they had landed at Polar City, and he had turned in his trip report.

Then he rose and strode to the starboard bullseye of the control cabin, to stare out at the foaming cloud mists of Venus, beneath the hull. Lips tight, eyes

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grim, he scanned the turbulent vapor that writhed in agonized contortions as the Venus-wind, beneath it, tore across the planet's boggy surface.

In three hours they would have circled the planet and dropped into the company's docks at Polar City. It was one of the three fog-free, solid ground regions on Venus, the other docks being in the South Polar region, and in the poisonous death trap of Hades Valley, over which they would presently pass.

In three hours and a half, approximately, he would no longer be Rocket Captain Daniel Harrigan. He would be just Dan Harrigan, unemployed.

The Jupiter knifed smoothly through the atmosphere, scarcely quivering as her Bensons blasted their energy out through the main tubes. Dan Harrigan's thoughts knifed through his brain as he stood there, oblivious of Jensen, the tall, blonde Swede at the control board. Harrigan's thoughts were hot, bitter, unpleasant.

So he was quitting! Quitting after one trip as Captain. He didn't have it. He didn't have the stuff it took to hold command in space!

He knew he was technically competent. He knew his mechanics, astrogation, interplanetary law, rocket handling. He ought to. He had boned up on it enough in the last four years since, fresh from a postgraduate college course, he had become a second, then a chief mate on a cargo rocket, and finally captain. But apparently he lacked the most important requisite of all—the ability to handle his men.

IUT in the empty reaches of space, where for six months on end men were cooped up inside a few hundred feet of steel runways and tiny cabins, with nothing to look at but the blackness of infinity, one couldn't rule solely by virtue of the authority vested in you in those gold rockets pinned to the shoulders. They had to obey because they wanted to, because they felt in you the stuff of command. Either that or you failed. Too many things could go wrong, accidentally or deliberately, in a ship

whose crew was sullen, nerve-taut, or mutinous.

And things had gone wrong.

Many times in the last twelve months, since the ship had blasted off from Polar City for the round trip run to earth and back—one hundred and eighty days each way—Dan Harrigan had tried to put his finger on the thing he had failed in, and always it had eluded him.

Maybe it was nothing more than his size—only five six, a mere shrimp in comparison to all the other men of the *Jupiter's* crew, with the exception of seventeen-year-old Jimmy Smith, the Kid, their cabin boy. Maybe it was his size and youthful appearance. Harrigan was still, to his own bitter annoyance, pink-cheeked and cherubic, although he was almost thirty. Even then he might have won them over. If it had not been for Mike Kelly.

Mike Kelly, the mate, the biggest man aboard, a rowdy, hell-roaring veteran of the earliest days of rocketry, a perfect example of the type that was on its way out in favor of spacemen with education, who knew more and more about science. Mike Kelly had expected to receive the command that had been given to Dan Harrigan. And he had taken his resentment out in sly sabotage, clever insubordination, a deliberate and successful attempt to turn the crew against Dan Harrigan.

That cargo shiftage a month out from Polar City; for instance. Mike Kelly could have prevented that if he had wanted to. It had taken three days to remedy, with Bensons dead, lest the ship shake to pieces. Then there had been that undogged refrigerator door which had let a month's supplies spoil, forcing them on short rations on the Earthward leg. And a misadjusted spark chamber that had burned thirty percent too much fuel for a month before he had discovered it. And a dozen others.

Such accidents looked bad on a trip report. Very bad.

It was a sign of Mike Kelly's cleverness that none of them had been serious enough to endanger the ship, but quite enough to throw them off schedule, and



The tentacle slid back over the rocky ridge, taking the rocket ship with it.

flight into a loss. Another trip like this one and he was through, automatically. The company would simply drop him. Harrigan was simply beating them to the punch.

This was bad enough, but it was not the worst. There was Diana. Harrigan groaned aloud as he thought of her. Diana Brinker was the daughter of the Port Director at Polar City Base. It had been because of Diana that Harrigan had wanted particularly to make good, to win his rating and title as a space commander.

True, there been nothing exactly definite about it, but he and Diana had had a tacit understanding. When he returned from this trip to Earth, successful and established, they were going to speak to the Port Director and then announce their engagement.

SHARPLY his memory carried Harrigan back to that day a year previous when the *Jupiter* had blasted off from Polar Base en route to Earth. Diana had come down to the space cradles to see him off. He remembered every line of her figure, every lineament of her lovely face as she stood there in the space admirals' club and told him good-by and wished him God speed.

"A year isn't such a terribly long time, Diana," he had said. "I—well, I have so much to say to you that I haven't the right to say now, but—if you'll be waiting when I return—I want to ask you something."

Diana had looked levelly at him—she was exactly his height—very precious and sweet in her pastel shorts of the latest fashion dura-cloth from Earth.

"I'll be waiting, Danny," she had whispered. "And I'll be praying every day that you make good. We'll go speak to Father together when you return."

Harrigan had wanted to kiss her then, but he knew he dared not. Nobody got forward with the daughter of the Port Director. So he had simply saluted her and made his way quickly to the control chamber of the *Jupiter*. With the ports sealed and everything in space shape, the huge ship blasted off. As she rocketed

out into space, Harrigan's last recollection of Diana was as she stood before the fluted columns of the administration office and waved farewell to the vanishing craft.

All that was over now. He was a failure, and no failure ever approached Director Brinker for another chance, much less with the nervy request to marry his daughter. So—in that sealed envelope was Dan Harrigan's resignation and the burial place of his fondest hopes. His gaze was hard and bitter as, automatically, he picked up, in the swirling cloud masses ahead, the curious whirlpool formation that signified they would presently be passing over barren, poison-filled Hades Valley.

Dan Harrigan's thoughts changed abruptly. He forgot his personal troubles as a red light began blinking frantically on the control board. Beneath his feet the slight vibration of the steel decks, responding to the steady throb of the Bensons had abruptly ceased. The engines had cut out!

Once more the efficient captain of a space craft, Harrigan's gaze flicked across the huge instrument and gauge panel. The blinking red light told him that the Bensons were dead. A smaller light reported that his main generator cable, on which the spark for his chambers depended, was shorted somewhere in its length.

He could find out in a matter of ten minutes by slapping instruments on it. Perhaps he could repair it in another ten. But that did not give him enough leeway. He had barely twenty minutes of flight momentum left in the ship.

DAN HARRIGAN saw Jensen the helmsman turn a white face toward him for orders. But Harrigan's decision was already made. Hades Valley was dead ahead.

"Stand by for emergency landing!" Harrigan snapped.

"Aye, aye, sir," Jensen gulped, and blurted the order into the ship's speaker.

Nine minutes later they were dropping down on their battery-powered landing jets, faster than they should have

dropped, but still within crash limites, into Hades Valley.

As they settled, Dan Harrigan examined the valley in his panoramic mirrors. He had been over it before, of course, but at such speed that it had been a blur of rocks and sand, useful only as a landmark.

Hades Valley was really a whole series of canyons leading into one main depression, all surfaced with red sand and having red rock cliffs towering about the perimeter. The rock formation gave a circular motion to the winds, making an air whirlpool whose eddies kept Hades Valley clear of the poisonous clouds of vapor and spore dust. Not that the atmosphere of the valley was any the less unhealthy on that account.

There was no water in it. It was almost the only really dry spot on Venus. Just sand, a kind of vegetations, one or two curious life forms, as yet unexplained bog, and a multitude of invisible geysers of gas from the planet's bowels. The gas was mostly hydrogen and nitrogen, with large quantities of carbon dioxide, so that the atmosphere in the valley was largely this mixture, with small amounts of oxygen and traces of other things present.

A nice, healthy spot. Yet some traces of former habitation by intelligent life had been found there, though no one had yet figured out how the one-time inhabitants had managed to live, considering that they would have had nothing to drink, nothing to breathe, and little to eat.

The valley contained no large life-form, according to the official charts. Yet, of a sudden, as the ship settled, Dan Harrigan saw something tremendous move at the base of a cliff. It was only an instant's glimpse, and he could not be sure. He scowled. It must have been a shadow. For there was nothing, living, anywhere, that large around there.

Then he put the incident out of his mind, as he dropped the *Jupiter* between two vertical cliffs of red rock onto the smoothest floor of sand he had been able to pick out. It was in the adjacent

canyon he thought he had seen the flicker of movement. In this one nothing whatever stirred. Still dropping a trifle too fast, they came down, jarred, rocked for an instant, and settled.

Dan Harrigan compressed his lips. Another light had winked on in front of him.

He had buckled a stern plate, thrusting his dive-shaft brace ring three-eighths of an inch out of line.

He was getting into his outside suit even before the ship had steadied, before the engineer's voice reported over the speakers.

"The short tests out someplace under the toolroom, sir," the engineer said. "Probably the connection at the elbow where it leads into the engine room has vibrated loose."

"Acknowledged." Anger crackled in Harrigan's voice. "Watch on duty! Into suits for exterior repair work. Watch off duty! Make good main generator cable. Lively, now!"

It was his watch that was on duty, and he was the first man out through the lock. In any case, he would supervise both repair jobs. But he had to ascertain the extent of the damage to the stern first.

To his relief, it was superficial. A clamp to draw the brace ring back into line, and a reinforcing of the welding would be enough.

He turned to issue the necessary orders, and was amazed to see the whole crew, in suits and headpieces, standing on the red sand watching him.

THE big figure of the mate stood with them. Kelly's much-battered features twisted into a grin, his small eyes glinting. Close beside Mike Kelly stood Jimmy Smith watching Kelly with open admiration.

The Kid was rocket-struck, rocket crazy. Harrigan had talked to him once or twice, tried to advise him, had told him that the thing he should do was to study like the devil in every spare moment if he really wanted to be a rocket man.

He had tried to make The Kid see

that the old days, when all a fellow needed to be a rocket man were an ability to breath carbon dioxide and take chances, were dead, that the future belonged to the experts who had an education, knew their science.

He had told The Kid he ought to quit at the end of the trip, and somehow or other go to college, spend four years studying his head off, cramming himself full of science, then come back to rock-eting. And for a time the boy had listened. Then Mike Kelly had gone to work on him, filled with scorn for Dan Harrigan and his ideas, his education, his scientific training, sketchy as it was in comparison to what the men, coming up in the next few years, would have to know.

The Kid had listened—and succumbed. Mike Kelly, bar-room brawler, perfect example of the rocket man who had first conquered space but must inevitably give way to the man trained and educated for it, was his idol. And the worshipful stare he was giving Mike Kelly now made plain to Dan Harrigan, with bitter clarity, how completely he had failed to win over even the youngest and least important member of his crew.

"What does this mean, Mr. Kelly?" Dan Harrigan demanded, in frosty tones. "Your orders were to repair the generator cable."

The mate suppressed his sly smile.

"Beg pardon, sir," the mate said, straight-faced now, "I was waiting for the captain's orders. We can't get into the toolroom to repair the cable, sir. The toolroom door has jammed. The jar when we sat down seems to have buckled it."

The spots of color were burning brighter in Dan Harrigan's cheeks.

"Then get a torch and burn it open!" he snapped.

The mate's face remained impassive, but malicious amusement glinted in his eyes.

"Yes, sir," he drawled. "But all the heavy-duty tools are in the toolroom. We can't get at a torch to burn the door because we can't get the door open. That's the situation, sir!"

CHAPTER II

Stolen Ship

DAN HARRIGAN took one step toward the bigger man, then caught himself just in time. Someone in the crew had snickered. He had heard it plainly. A man can actually hear better in a helmet than out of it, thanks to the audio-ears.

It was a ridiculous situation—to be unable to open a damaged toolroom door because the tools necessary were on the other side of it. A situation that could not arise once in ten thousand flights. A situation that would not have arisen now but for the mate's sabotage, in letting the cargo shift months before. Yet within twenty-four hours it would be the joke of every spaceport on three planets!

In that first moment of thinking, Dan Harrigan could see no way out. Stifling grins, his crew was waiting for him to figure out some way to overcome the 'silly problem, and he was racking his mind desperately for the right order to give, when the matter was taken out of his hands.

Someone in the crew gave a hoarse yell of terror, then all of them were stumbling backwards out of danger. From over the cliffs, a hundred feet above the nose of the *Jupiter*, a black tendril as thick as the trunk of a redwood tree came snaking. It touched the shiny metal nose of the freighter, then slid down and wrapped itself completely about the ship.

The tentacle tightened then, retracted, slid backwards over the rocky ledge whence it had appeared—and the *Jupiter* went with it!

Dan Harrigan got in just three shots with the explosive-bullet automatic which was part of the equipment of an officer's outside suit. They had no effect at all on the tendril. With a strength unbelievable, the titanic black tentacle lifted the stubby freighter clear of the rocks, held it aloft for an instant as if in triumph, and then vanished with it on

the other side of the rocky barrier.

Ten minutes later it was a sobered crew that trailed after Dan Harrigan down the scorching, red-sand valley. Even big Mike Kelly was silenced. The ten men exchanged apprehensive glances, and Harrigan was aware of their gaze on his back, though he did not turn.

Only young Jimmy Smith, seemed undismayed. It was his first flight, and his first experience in a suit. He did not realize, probably, that each man of them had oxygen enough for just six hours in his suit—no water—no food.

Seeming unmindful of the weight of his suit, he darted from side to side, peering at rocks and curious, multi-colored lichens, staring at the lazily drifting hour-glass plants that floated through the air past them, spinning slowly. He tried to catch one of the absurd black spheres, nick-named "eight-balls," that appeared from among the rocks to accompany them, rolling and bounding along beside them, hopping back and forth over their heads.

Round, black, spongy creatures with shiny surfaces, ranging from billiard-ball to push-ball size, they were neither plants nor animals, since their metabolism was entirely unlike that of either. They were as tough as oak-cured leather, as light as sponge rubber, and lived on a diet of hydrogen and oxygen, as Harrigan knew. He had studied all the literature available concerning Hades Valley, as well as every other point he might touch at or be forced to land at some day. He also knew they were almost harmless.

"Smith!" Harrigan's voice cracked out. "Leave those things alone! Walk along with the others and touch nothing without orders."

"Yes, sir," the boy answered, taken aback, and bewildered. He rejoined the trudging group.

It was on the tip of Harrigan's tongue to explain that their oxygen had to be conserved, and that physical exertion of any kind used it up rapidly, but he refrained. He was the captain. And the captain's orders were not subject to either questions or explanations.

IT WAS Mike Kelly not The Kid, who kicked the soccer-ball sized ebony sphere that came rolling up toward his feet. As the black ball-creature came close, he drew back one foot and lashed out. The eight-ball rose soaring in the air, made a great arc, and fell to the sand a hundred yards away.

"Goal!" Mike Kelly grunted, with sour satisfaction.

"Mr. Kelly," Dan Harrigan turned back, angrily. "My orders also apply to—"

Harrigan didn't get the chance to finish. The outraged eight-ball, bounding back, plummeted down at him from a height of fifty feet. He ducked aside, and the thing struck the hard sand, contracted, and shot far back up into the air. Before anyone could laugh scores more of the creatures were bounding into the air from behind rocks and dunes. From as far as a quarter of a mile away they came bouncing upward in tremendous leaps, plummeting downward, covering thirty and forty yards at a leap.

In a space of seconds they were thundering down on the stranded crew of the *Jupiter* like black cannonballs dropping out of the sky, trying to pound them into the sand.

"Take cover," Dan Harrigan shouted. "Get under the edge of a rock. They can't hurt you there."

The men scrambled for rocks and ledges. There they crouched as hundreds of the ball creatures pounded the sand in an excited dance of vengeance that would have been comical if the situation had not been so serious.

A man caught in the open could be killed by the impact of the creatures, light as they were. But the attack lasted no longer than a couple of minutes. Presently the spheres bounded away and disappeared, streaked with spots of moisture as if sweating from their efforts.

The crew moved on then, and this time Harrigan had to give no orders to touch nothing. The men drew aside even when the harmless hour-glass plants drifted by, as if the things might be poison. They stayed close behind the captain.

Ignoring the crew shuffling at his

heels, Dan Harrigan tried fiercely to concentrate on the problem that faced him. He was the captain, and he was responsible for them all. The air was unbreathable. There was no water. Animal life was nearly non-existent. Yet in these barren, tortured canyons, beside which earth's own Death Valley was a carefree vacation spot, intelligent life had once existed!

It was difficult to believe, but Dan Harrigan knew it was true. Not men, of course, but intelligent, warm-blooded, oxygen breathing mammals. Their habitations still remained. Along the cliff faces, high up where the sun would catch the rock almost the whole of a Venusian forty-eight hour daylight period, were the mouths of caves they had lived in.

Invariably each cave mouth was covered by a curious plaster grillwork—a wall pierced by hundreds of holes, set eight to ten inches apart, to let in light, possibly. No other reason for the grilles had ever been suggested.

In these caves the one-time inhabitants of the valley had lived, and probably they had eaten lichens and lizards. But how they had breathed remained a profound scientific mystery, for no life higher than the sluggish lizards could survive in that oxygen-lacking atmosphere. What they might have drunk was no less baffling.

But if a high order of creatures had actually managed to live in that environment, Dan Harrigan wanted to know how. Only by solving the secret could he hope to keep his men alive if they failed to recover the *Jupiter*.

That must be his first endeavor, of course. But if the whole creature that had seized the ship was in proportion to the incredible tentacle that had come snaking over the cliffs—Dan Harrigan's jaw set. Even in the *Jupiter* they had no weapon that would make any impression on anything so titanic. But he would try.

left into a second gorge. The crew pressed at his heels with panicky nervousness as their oxygen gauges registered steadily lower. It was in this canyon that Harrigan had seen the flicker of movement as the *Jupiter* settled, and it was from this one that the monstrous tentacle had reached forth to seize and snatch away the ship.

And in it, an hour later, they found the *Jupiter*.

Dan Harrigan, reaching the crest of a rocky slope, stopped abruptly. The crew stumbled to a halt behind him, their breathing loud in the silence. He gave them a swift look. Some of the faces he saw behind the vitrite plates were green. All were dismayed, even Mike Kelly.

There the *Jupiter* lay, on its side, its polished surface marred by great scratches where it had been drawn across jagged rocks. It was nose downward on a rocky slope, near a tarry muck pool.

The muck pool, spreading out and lapping at the feet of the cliffs on either side, extended for almost a quarter of a mile. The further half of it ran beneath the low, arched mouth of a cavern which, so far as Dan Harrigan could tell, reached into the wall of rough rock for a tremendous distance.

But it was the creature—thing—monstrosity, that lay sprawled across the rocks, across the surface of the bog, and partly over the *Jupiter* itself which filled the men with horror.

The black, leathery surface of the creature—covered with muck and moisture in spots, dry and shiny elsewhere—rolled and rippled incessantly. The gigantic tentacle that lay over and around the *Jupiter* could as easily have held four other ships in its grasp. A second tremendous arm was coiled about a rocky outthrust, half way up the cliffs. The blunt, barrel-sized tip of a third rested not forty feet away from the gaping crew.

The creature itself, in the bog, was at least four hundred yards away!

Ten acres of black skin surface were in sight, Dan Harrigan estimated quickly. How much of the thing there was altogether no one could guess, be-

THEY reached the mouth of the canyon and came out into the central valley, a mile or more across, rock littered and empty. Dan Harrigan scanned it, saw nothing, and swung sharply to his

cause the rest of it was submerged in the bog that ran back into the gloom of the great cavern.

The men stood and stared in silence for half a minute. Then without warning the tip of the tentacle directly before them rippled and thrust forward.

It darted toward them like a flexible tree trunk, and the crew broke and ran, yelling. Yanking at his gun, Harrigan stumbled backwards. He fired three shots, and saw the explosive bullets pluck out goutts of dark rubbery matter. Then the swinging mass knocked him down.

The tenacle was too tremendous to grasp him—like an elephant's trunk trying to encircle an ant. But as it swung by it struck him a glancing blow, and the impact threw him forty feet across the sand, with a bone-jarring thud. Harrigan tried to struggle to his feet as it swung back questingly, and hands grasped him under the arm pits. Two of his men hauled him to safety, ducking low under the shelter of a rock.

The great black coil swished over their heads half a dozen times, hesitated, then retracted back out of sight on the other side of the ridge.

Dan Harrigan and his rescuers got shakily to their feet. They were Mike Kelly and the Kid. Dan Harrigan said, in clipped tones, "Thanks."

Then holstering his useless gun, he led the way back down the gorge.

CHAPTER III

Precious Oxygen

THE crew slumped down on rocks and outcroppings as Dan Harrigan stood and stared, in desperate questioning, at the grille-blocked mouth of the big cave.

This cave seemed safe. It was down the valley, about three-quarters of a mile from the *Jupiter* and the monster. They had three hours of oxygen left.

Dan Harrigan stared at that cave mouth as the others slumped in attitudes of despair. The usual wall of crude

plaster, pierced by countless holes, closed it. Harrigan's mind struggled helplessly with the problem. What was the wall? What were the holes? Air holes? But no form of mammal life could breath that outside atmosphere. The effort would have been to keep the atmosphere out, not let it in.

Harrigan scowled as he watched an hour-glass plant, its double gaping mouths as big around as bass drums, settle down upon the rock a dozen feet away. In a moment a small eight-ball appeared and rolled up, stopping directly behind the plant.

Dan Harrigan saw minute holes appear in the black surface of the sphere, remain open a few second, and then close. Twenty seconds later the holes opened once more. Minute drops of liquid oozed out and evaporated, and they closed again. Half a dozen repetitions, and then the black ball rolled and bounced away more swiftly than it had come, as if it had only paused a moment to get its breath.

To get its breath?

Dan Harrigan started as if he had been stung. Jumping to his feet, he roared orders at his startled, doubting crew in a voice he hardly recognized as his own.

It took an hour—an hour of precious oxygen—to rip out the old wall of the big cave and build a new one. Dan Harrigan had already noted the manner in which the fungus clinging to the rock squashed when a man stepped on it. It would spread out into a pulp which had the consistency of putty.

This, mashed and mixed with sand, proved to be the mortar the unknown ancients had used. Ten men working at top speed made a lot of it in an hour, and the hour-glass plants were easy to catch as they fluttered slowly along.

Sixty minutes later the wall was done, and the open "mouths" of hundreds of hour-glass plants protruded from it. They had been built into the wall like bricks, and lichen-plaster had been slapped around their constricted middles. Like so many living funnels their open mouths were turned toward the sun now. Within those mouths millions of

leaf filaments were in continuous motion, drawing the air in, forcing it through their narrow middles, expelling it at the opposite end.

Inside the cave,, the duplicate hundreds of plant mouths gaped into the dim interior. With the small entrance, through which the crew had crawled securely blocked, Dan Harrigan waited ten minutes. Then deliberately he took off his helmet.

He breathed. There was 'oxygen enough in the air to keep a man alive. Breathing that way was thin and unsatisfying, but oxygen certainly was there. The waving filaments within the plants that were working this miracle, transforming noxious gas into breathable atmosphere, made a dry rustling in the silence. Then somebody swore in profound amazement.

"Off helmets," Harrigan ordered. "Cut oxygen. Sit down and take it easy. There's barely enough air coming in for all of us, but it'll have to do."

Jimmy Smith, stared at him in open-mouthed admiration. Dan Harrigan felt a flush of pleasure—then turned abruptly away. What he had done was no great thing, really. It was the most elementary of science, but it took the clue of the eight-ball to enable him to stumble on it.

Plants in sunlight absorbed carbon dioxide, which was thick in the atmosphere of Hades Valley, and gave off oxygen in the age-old miracle of plant chemistry. The hundreds of hour-glass plants imprisoned in the wall across the mouth of the cave, sucking air through themselves, turning the carbon dioxide into oxygen, pouring into the cave enough of the oxygen to sustain life.

PRESENTLY the atmosphere in the cave grew rich enough so that the men no longer had to gasp for breath, but could breathe almost normally. Lying back, grinning, even joking in lowered voices, the crew watched Dan Harrigan with eyes that held a grudging but hopeful admiration, and waited for him to achieve another miracle.

What he did next was not a miracle.

Any science student could have explained it easily enough. But Dan Harrigan did not choose to. Again the long-gone and forgotten ancients had left a clue for him—the great bin-like space at the rear of the cave, blocked off by a perforated wall with a small trough running from beneath it to a bowl-like depression in the center of the floor.

Inside the bin were scores of time-shrunken leather scraps, the carcasses of dead eight-balls.

Harrigan ordered the men to throw out the shrunken hides. Then a hundred more eight-balls, as many as the bin would hold, were captured with some difficulty. Struggling in the men's hands like great, beating hearts, they were carried in and placed in the bin.

When it was full, Dan Harrigan sealed the opening with a rock. Within the confined space the captured creatures pulsed and struggled frantically to be free. The oxygen-rich air inside the cave was not to their liking. Harrigan guessed that it stepped up their curious metabolism to a high temperature, for it drove them to frenzied activity. The thud of their struggle to break out filled the cave with roaring thunder.

But presently liquid began to trickle down the trough leading out from the bin. The trickle became a tiny stream, and slowly the smooth bowl in the floor began to fill.

When there was a cup of liquid in it, Dan Harrigan scooped it up in the unscrewed cover of one of his earpieces, dropped in an antiseptic tablet from his belt kit, and tasted it.

It was water—warm, grimy, but palatable.

Then men crowded around the basin, waiting for it to fill again. They were grinning from ear to ear. They had air and water. Now they believed they could wait for rescue.

Dan Harrigan knew better. They had two hours of oxygen left in their suits, and it was four hours to sundown. Everything he had done had won them just a four-hour respite, thus far.

This, then, was how the long-gone ancients had maintained life!

But they must have indulged in some form of nightly hibernation, during which their bodies used little or no oxygen, for the plants would not continue to furnish oxygen after dark. At night a plant burned oxygen and gave off carbon dioxide, reversing the sunlight-activated process. Dan Harrigan's men could not hibernate.

He sat and tried to think, and the pounding of the frantic eight-balls in their prison made a roaring in his ears which would not let his thoughts come. Strange and alien forms of life though they were, he almost pitied the eight-balls for the suffering they were undergoing in that oxygen-enriched atmosphere.

And then the whole secret of life here exploded in his brain like dynamite.

He leaped up, jammed on his helmet, forced his way through the crew to the sealed bin, opened it, and drew out the first black sphere he could reach.

In his arms it expanded and contracted, pulsing desperately, but he held it and carried it outside. Then he released it. At once the ball-creature rolled and bounded away, twisting and spinning as though injured and unable to control itself. It bounded eccentrically down the valley, caroming from rocks and cliffs, and was gone.

Dan Harrigan ducked back into the cave and roared an order.

"Helmets on! Outside!"

The men stared at him as they rose reluctantly to their feet.

"Outside!" Harrigan ordered again. "We're returning to the ship!"

They moved with slow reluctance toward their helmets, not quite daring to disobey.

ALL except Mike Kelly who glowered at Dan Harrigan and voiced their thoughts.

"What for?" he demanded, his battered face rebellious. "We're doing all right now. All we've gotta do is wait and be rescued. Why should we go back and be killed by any critter like that one that's got the ship?"

With cold eyes and tight lips, Dan

Harrigan snapped out the gun at his waist and held it level.

"Mr. Kelly," he said, ice crackling in his voice, "one more word and you're under arrest for mutiny. Give me your gun and get outside."

The mate stood there for an instant, arms swinging, eyes smoldering, as if preparing to defy him. Then sullenly he unbuckled his pistol holster and tossed it at Harrigan's feet. He jammed on a headpiece and crawled out. Dan Harrigan put away his gun and looked the rest over with a hostile face.

"For your information," he said sarcastically, "the air-conditioning system in this hotel is shut down at sunset. We can't hope to be rescued before tomorrow, which is forty-eight hours away. So if we want to keep on living, we have to recapture the *Jupiter*."

They gaped at him, stark dismay on their faces. And the kid, who was too young to know better, blurted out an objection.

"B-but, sir! How—how can we fix the ship, or take off, even if we get it back, if we can't get at the tools?"

Captain Daniel Harrigan's smile had nothing of humor in it.

"That," he said, "is for the captain to worry about."

He turned and ducked out into the open, where the mate was sullenly waiting; and slowly, doubtfully, the rest of the crew followed.

In the next hour, driven on by Dan Harrigan's lashing tongue, they worked in a species of madness.

Clambering up onto the cliffs that surrounded the *Jupiter* and the titanic monster in his sink hole, making as little noise as they could, they knocked down and captured drifting hour-glass plants by scores, by hundreds, by thousands.

For five minutes while his men worked, Dan Harrigan stared down at the somnolent black mass that wallowed beneath him, one tentacle still enwrapping the ship.

Even from here, a hundred feet above, he could see the pores in the black flesh—if it was flesh—open and close to the monster's breathing, or eating, of the

oxygen-hydrogen atmosphere.

It was a life form similar to the round black eight-balls then. A hydrogen eater. Perhaps some monstrous hybrid that had been growing there for centuries, if not for thousands of years, stewing in its own juices.

The mucky bog in which it lay undoubtedly was produced by its own elimination of water over a period of many years. Eating hydrogen from the hydrogen springs that could be seen bubbling up through the ooze, eliminating the tons of water that must result in a single day, it had created its own swamp in the dust and sand of the valley.

But that was what Dan Harrigan wanted to be sure of. And being sure, he began to work as frantically as any of his men.

He knocked down every hour-glass plant that drifted within reach. With one slash of his belt knife he cut them in half at the narrow middle, and then tossed the crippled, fluttering halves down into the canyon below.

The halves, unable to fly as they had before, landed on the monster, or on the surface of the sink hole, or on the rocks close by. Their ribbon-like leaves fluttered more wildly than before, as if in agitation at the mutilation. Taking in carbon dioxide, giving off oxygen—

Captain Dan Harrigan's plan was a desperate one!

CHAPTER IV

Entombed Titan

BRIGHT sunlight still shone down into the gorge. It would last for maybe an hour more. They had an hour then in which to win their fight for life.

Along the cliffs, the plants fluttering up to enjoy the waning sunlight were abundant. At the end of an hour there were thousands of the crippled halves showing gray-green on and around the titan.

Their light dropping had not as yet disturbed the vast bulk, though from

time to time its surface had rippled and twitched. Now with sharp relief Dan Harrigan signaled retreat back along the cliffs. Hastily his crew scrambled away, to a point a half mile distant, well above the canyon floor. From a vantage point a little closer Dan Harrigan watched intently.

The monster now seemed to become aware of the thousands of plants fluttering on and about it in little crippled movements. Its skin surface was rippling more frequently, and presently the extended tentacle lifted and swung back and forth in restless motion. The arm that anchored it to the cliff contracted, half-lifting it, then let go. The great creature dropped back into its ooze with a vast squashy splash, and there stayed partially submerged, stirring uneasily, for some minutes.

Dan Harrigan, watched, almost holding his breath. Into the confined space around the creature the hour-glass plants were pouring an unaccustomed concentration of oxygen. As the hour-glasses had become agitated and distressed, so at last was the enriched atmosphere now irritating the monster.

It stirred and shifted still more, and waves of muck splashed up against the cliffs. Then it shook itself, sending ooze flying hundreds of yards. The tentacle around the *Jupiter* unwound. And the vast thing began to slide backwards, withdrawing itself into its slime where the air could not reach it.

It sucked itself backwards into the vast cavern that overhung the far end of the muck hole. The titanic body submerged completely, leaving waves in the slime, and drew back beneath the low, arched mouth of the cavern. Then, except for a single tentacle that remained out, switching back and forth as if testing the air, it was gone.

The men let out a yell of exultation and began to scramble forward toward the now-freed *Jupiter*. But with a gesture Dan Harrigan waved them back. He drew his gun.

"Get down" he snapped. "Get behind rocks. Get under something if you can. Disconnect the audio ears."

Harrigan knew the cavern above the monster's bed was filled with hydrogen and oxygen. He dropped behind a rock, leveled the gun, and fired. The bullet struck a rocky wall deep within the cavern mouth, and exploded in a yellow blossom of flame.

Then, from deep under the cliffs, a blast emerged that roared and bellowed down the valley in a smashing hammer of concussion.

The cliffs themselves, under which the cavern had been hollowed, shivered and leaned outwards. For an instant they hung suspended. Then with a roar, that echoed the explosion, they thundered down, collapsing upon themselves, spilling into the great muck hole, piling a hundred thousand tons of rock upon the submerged monster.

Muck rose in a solid curtain, two hundred feet high, and collapsed, dirtying the cliffs and valley for half a mile. The *Jupiter* was covered. It rocked for a dreadful moment as a wave of slime pulled at it. Then the bog stuff fell back, and the ship was still in place.

More rock rumbled down. For an instant, from some great depth, the tip of a single tentacle snaked up out of the rock-filled sink hole and slapped frantically about. Missing the *Jupiter* by a hair, it came down on a rock cliff with such force that great boulders were pulverized. Then the tentacle whipped back beneath the surface.

FOR half an hour the sullen surface of the bog boiled and seethed. But the monster was gone.

Then Harrigan collected the explosive-bullet pistols from Kelly and other officers of the *Jupiter* and laboriously blasted open the tool-room door.

Forty-five minutes later, with twilight already night in the deepest parts of the valley, they eased the ship erect with her pneumatic emergency jacks, took in the jacks, dogged locks, and blasted out.

They settled into their berth at Polar Base two hours and ten minutes later. Five minutes after that Dan Harrigan, tight-lipped, gave to the messenger who boarded them two envelopes, one con-

taining his trip report, the other his resignation, to take to the V-E Port Director.

Then, with eyes bright and cold from inward bitterness, he strode to the mate's cabin to do what he had been waiting to do for almost a year now.

He was going to give Mike Kelly the licking of his life. Or at least, he was going to try.

The big mate still glowered at him with suspicion and hesitation even after they were facing each other in the ship's tiny gym, stripped to the waist. They wore no gloves—that wasn't Mike Kelly's barroom style of fighting, and Dan Harrigan was fiercely determined to claim no advantage in this combat he had forced.

Towering above him, Mike Kelly hesitated, while the crew, gathered around the walls of the gym, looked on in unbelieving silence at the scene, unprecedented in the rocket marine.

"Come on," Dan Harrigan taunted. "You've hated me from the minute I came aboard. You've sabotaged me in every way you could without being detected. And I couldn't do a thing about it. It means a death sentence for a crew member to strike the captain while in flight. Conversely, for a captain to strike a crewman, means ruin, as you knew perfectly well. I wasn't going to be busted just for the satisfaction of handing you what you had coming. But we're berthed now, and the rules are off. I'm going to give you the lacing of your life. So come on and get it. Or are you afraid to take it when you're not full of Martian pulquillera?"

Mike Kelly's lips worked. Then he rushed.

"All right, bug, you asked for it," he snarled, and swung a bear-like paw.

Dan Harrigan ducked under, flicking a right to Mike Kelly's nose, and the fight was on.

The mate had five inches in height and fifty pounds in weight on him, plus half a dozen inches in reach. The mere touch of his arm flung Dan against the steel walls with stunning force. But Dan Harrigan had done something beside study

in college, though he had never boasted about it. He had been intercollegiate boxing champion at his weight. And he counted on his training to make up for the mate's physical superiority.

Harrigan slipped aside as Kelly rushed in, stepped inside the mate's flailing fists, and planted a left and right to the big man's unprotected stomach. Kelly grunted, and missed with a blow that still, though only hitting Harrigan's shoulder, smashed him into the partition with a terrific thud. He gulped in air and came back, cautiously, and after that time merged into one interminable nightmare without beginning or end.

Time and again Mike Kelly charged. Time and again Dan eluded him, getting in a quick, driving blow, but not always escaping without punishment. His head was pounding and his ears ringing from roundhouse rights he had only partially ducked. One eye was closing. And he knew that not his mind, but his instincts, were guiding his movements.

But he kept working on the mate, and Kelly's movements became slower. Presently his head hung low, like a tired bear's at bay. His nose was bloody, and he was breathing in great gulps through his mouth.

It was time to make the kill. Harrigan knew it; and knew if he didn't do it now, he was finished himself.

He slid forward. Mike Kelly raised his head, glared at him, and rushed. Dan Harrigan waited, ducked beneath the annihilating blow, and then put all his weight and speed into one smash to the mate's jaw.

He felt his knuckles go as the blow landed. Pain laced up his arm. But Mike Kelly, eyes blank, dropped his hands and plunged forward toward the steel deck.

Big, blonde Jensen caught him, and lowered him to the plates.

Followed by dead silence, Dan Harrigan turned on his heel and stumbled out. Unsteadily he strode down the passageway to his cabin, locked the door on the inside, and dropped to his berth to rest for a few moments before dressing and reporting to the Port Director.

Almost before he struck the blankets he was asleep.

DAN HARRIGAN slept a solid twenty hours without waking, and when he finally did open his eyes, painfully and with difficulty because they were both swollen, he had difficulty in believing the evidence of the clock.

Stiffly he rose, aching and bruised. But strangely enough, in spite of that he felt better than he had in almost a year. As swiftly as he could he took a hot shower, made himself as presentable as possible, though his right hand was swollen to twice its size and to touch anything with it caused him to wince with pain.

Then he strode forth to present himself at the office of the Port Director.

Brinker, a stout, slow-moving man who had been a captain himself on several pioneering voyages, rose and waved Harrigan to a seat. Dan Harrigan, however, refused the offer and remained stiffly at attention.

"Thank you, sir," he said, feeling strangely calm, quite without anger or bitterness any more, even toward Mike Kelly. "I'll stand, if you don't mind. You have read my report?"

"Your report? Oh, certainly, Captain Harrigan," Brinker rumbled. "Quite an exploit of yours, that. By now it's being talked about all over Polar City. Remarkable work, Captain."

"Thank you," Dan Harrigan said, unsmiling. He was not tense, not nervous—merely anxious to have the thing over. "You have acted on my resignation, sir?"

Brinker's eyes twinkled, but a glance at the younger man's serious face sobered him. "Hmmm," he said, tapping a paper on his desk. "About your resignation, Captain Harrigan, before we discuss it, here's a documentary affidavit I'd like you to look at. The crew of the *Jupiter* sent it over with a representative a couple of hours ago. Read it please."

Harrigan accepted the paper doubtfully. He could guess its nature. Not knowing he had resigned, the crew had brought charges against him. Then his gaze focused on the typed statement, sped on to note the complete list of

names signed thereto, and back to finish reading this extraordinary document.

He looked up blankly.

"But, sir," he said to the director, "this statement—I can't—that is, I mean—"

"Quite so." Director Brinker nodded. "Most unusual case. I can't remember any previous affair like it. It's unprecedented for a crew to admit en masse having been at fault in a number of minor mishaps that no captain can avoid if his men are not cooperating."

"But—" Harrigan began again, dazed.

"I understand," said the director kindly. "That offer to ship with you on a trip to—ah—Purgatory—if we ever establish a landing port there—indicates they feel quite strongly on the matter. It isn't every captain in space service who can win himself such a loyal crew in one voyage—or in half a dozen. My congratulations, Captain. You seem to have made a firm believer out of your mate who signed that document first. What's his name—Mike Kelly? He's the man who brought that report to me. Now, about your resignation. . . ."

The director lifted an envelope from his desk. His blue eyes frankly twinkling now, he tore it across twice and tossed the pieces into a waste trap.

"Can't you relax, my boy?" he said, chuckling. "The official part of this visit is over. It's time now that a successful space commander should observe the social amenities." He cleared his throat and waved his hand toward the doorway of his private office.

Harrigan wrinkled his brow slightly and walked to look. Then he started, continuing to stare. Near the doorway stood Diana, a radiant, lovely figure, her eyes fixed tenderly upon him.

"Diana!" he choked out.

"Danny!" she cried, holding out her hands and coming forward. "I couldn't wait any longer. I've told Father about us. And he's delighted."

In a moment the girl was in Harrigan's arms, and all of the remaining vestiges

of bitterness washed completely out of his mind and heart.

"Yes," said Director Brinker, beaming at the pair of lovers who were no longer conscious of his presence. "I think—ahem! I think I am a bit superfluous here."

So he quietly went out and closed the door behind him.

ABOARD the *Jupiter*, in his cabin, Mate Mike Kelly was holding forth to a solitary listener.

"Listen, Kid," he was saying sternly to young Jimmy Smith, "what was it the skipper kept telling you after you first signed on?"

"He said to become a real spaceman I had to get an education—had to learn science."

"That's exactly what he said," Mike Kelly rumbled. "He further said that the day of muggs like me without education is done. And he's right, see? Look what he done. Could he have done it if he hadn't known science? Could any other man you know have done it?"

"No, sir. They sure couldn't, Mr. Kelly," the Kid agreed solemnly.

"You bet they couldn't!" roared the mate. "So you're gonna do like the skipper advised. You're gonna quit rocketin' right now and go to school—go through college, learn what Dan Harrigan learned. Why, look what he did to me. Look at these black eyes. I thought all along he was a stuck-up little dilly who'd fade if I breathed on him hard. And then yesterday I couldn't even touch him. He worked me over and cut me down to his size and then smacked me silly. All because he'd been to college."

"I didn't know they taught you stuff like that, Kid, but they do, and that's what you're gonna learn. Science, like the skipper's got. And how to fight scientific like he does, too, won't hurt. Now, pack your belongings and be ready to tell Captain Harrigan good-by when he comes back aboard this ship."

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WALTER LIPPMANN

The Reasons Why

By **WALTER LIPPMANN**

Author of "United States Foreign Policy," and many other important books

THE man who understands the war bonds will certainly buy them. For we can either save the money we do not have to spend now in order to live, or we shall lose it. It is one or the other.

We understand the war bonds when we see that the money invested in them cannot be spent now. We may think we can spend it because we can go to a shop and buy something we do not absolutely have to have.

But if we do that, then six months, twelve months, eighteen months from now when we go to a shop to buy something we really do have to have, it will cost us the present price plus a lot more than we did not save now.

We shall have to give away then, and get nothing in return, what we can keep now by buying bonds. This is known as inflation. We have an inflation when money, that should not have been spent, is taken away from us be-

cause we were not sensible enough to put it in cold storage until it can in fact be spent.

Why We Cannot Spend

Why cannot all our money be spent now? Because ten million Americans are in the Armed Forces doing a work which is of infinite value, but cannot be sold in the shop. Because another twenty million or so of Americans are making things which we intend to give away to our enemies as a reward for their crimes.

These things are being delivered freely and profusely wherever we can find enemies to receive them. So they are not on sale in our shops, and anyway none of us really wish to buy a bomb for the parlor, a tank to park in his garage, or a Flying Fortress for his cow pasture.

We are making a prodigious amount of stuff that is not for sale, and therefore there is just not enough. Not a bit more than enough of stuff

that is for sale. That is why we cannot spend all our money until the war is won, and we can go back to making goods that can be sold and that we wish to buy.

Our extra money is the money that there are not enough goods for. It is for the time being no more useful to us than a big bank account in New York would have been to Robinson Crusoe shipwrecked on his island.

The Penalty of Ignorance

If we know that this money is useless now, we can save it and it will be useful later. If we have not the brains to see that it is useless now, then the penalty for our ignorance is that we shall lose the money.

There is no way of keeping that money, except perhaps stuffing it in a mattress or burying it in the garden or leaving it to lie in a bank—there is no way unless we put it in war bonds.

If we do not put it in war bonds, we can lose it altogether in several different ways. It can be taken away in still higher taxes and that is the last we shall ever see of it.

If it is not taxed away, it will be taken away by a rise in the cost of living which will take two or three dollars for every one dollar that it now costs to buy some necessary things.

No Medals!

A war bond, therefore, is the only known way by which money that cannot be spent during the war can be kept safely, and even increased, until after the war. So we do not really deserve any medals for buying war bonds. We are entitled to a dunce-cap if we do not buy them.

However, we do get something more than our money back with interest when we buy a war bond.

We get the feeling, especially if we have really squeezed ourselves to buy more than we think we can afford—we get the feeling that we have had some little part, a very small and easy part, but still a part in an undertaking which is saving this republic and will be remembered in glory as long as the republic exists.

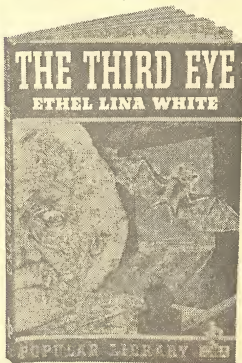
We shall have the right to believe, too—and this surely is consoling and reassuring beyond words—that by this act of sheer common sense and ordinary civic decency, we are making it certain that our men can come back from abroad to a country which is fit to live in.

That is the very least we can do for them. If we do not do it, if we spend all our money now, we shall disgrace ourselves. For by our inordinate buying which drives prices up through the ceiling, we shall in effect have sacked the country while they are away fighting to save it.

We shall never do that if we take the trouble to understand what we are doing.

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THE READER SPEAKS

(Continued from page 11)

gone for TWS. And it's been quite a year. The improvement this year over the issues of last year has been vast, to say the least.

It will be indeed a task of Herculean proportions to pick out the ten best stories of the year, but, as you no doubt know, I am an intrepid character; nothing daunts me.

With a brutal leer at my cringing Remington, Oliver swings into action. As one lunatic said to the other, we're off!

1. "The Devil's Fiddle" by N. R. de Mexico. There are no two ways about it—this was a great story. It remains just as vivid today as on the day I first read it—and that is vivid. The beautiful prose in this story bit and hit hard at the reader; its sad mood seemed somehow to leap off the page and become a part of you as you read it. It takes first place by a comfortable margin.

2. "The Piper," by Ray Bradbury. Here's another unforgettable piece, done by a master at stringing words together and making the reader live the story. It was excellently done.

3. "Conquest of Venus," by Joseph J. Millard. What has happened to the rest of this splendid series?

4. "The Lotos Eaters," by Bolling Branham. An almost poetic science-fantasy that, as I mentioned once before, somehow reminded me of Merritt—the Merritt that is now lost to us forever. It is up to the Branham to carry on.

5. "Peril on Phoebeus," by Nelson S. Bond. When Bond is Bond and not just a money-making robot, his science-fiction is well nigh unbeatable. Bond seldom is himself these days—it's good to see a "Peril on Phoebeus" pop up occasionally.

6. "The Man From the Stars," by Robert Moore Williams. A really different story, well-written.

7. "Star Arrow," by Ray Cummings. A space yarn as only Cummings can write 'em. More, by all means.

8. "Daymare," by Fredric Brown. I do not like detective stories parading around as science fiction. But Brown put something into this one, something different. But please—watch the detective angle. And if you must have 'em—let Brown author them.

9. "Expedition," by Anthony Boucher. Excellent—really funny yarn with an uncomfortable finale.

10. "The Bubble People," by James Henry Carlisle, III. Amateur or not, this was really good! The concepts, writing, atmosphere—all were excellent. Come again, Mr. JHC, III!

Honorable mention goes to Ray Cummings for "The Golden Temple" and "Tubby—Atom Smasher," to Ray Bradbury for "Promotion to Satellite," and to Joel Townsley Rogers for "Through the Blackboard."

The best cover was in April, for "Conquest of Venus," closely followed by the one in August for "The Lotos Eaters." My compliments to Mr. Bergey on the year's work—he really can paint, after all, when the editorial rein relaxes a bit.

The best issue of the year, as should be obvious above, was the current number—Fall—which was really something. If this improvement continues, next year is going to see some great stuff. Don't let us down.

And that, as the man said, is that. Any criticisms of the above list will be appreciated, and given careful consideration while in my incinerator.—3956 Ledgewood, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Okay, Kiwi Oliver, nicely enough said. How your ratings will burn up the other kiwis I don't know. All I can say is that I find already that some things you say do not jibe with things already said in this astrology chamber this issue. It must be the space warp, no? It wouldn't be the Fitzgerald Contradiction, would you think?

Oh, well pass me a fresh Xeno jug, and let's get on with this debate.

ARMY ALPHABET

By Sgt. Jerry A. Mace

Dear Sarge: Deuber Bergey is in his usual fine form on the Fall issue cover and, as we say in the Army, everything is SNAFU. To the 4P's that means Situation Normal, All Fouled Up—or words to that effect.

For instance, take a gander at the traverse slot

he has so thoughtfully provided in the side of his space burner through which the gunner is firing while staying deeply off into space—no doubt he locates the target telepathically. Very handy. The slot of course also provides ventilation which is highly necessary in a space ship. And that character with the megaphone—is he looking for a football game or coaching the pilot? Ah mystery. Note also the chappie gazing through the large end of his binoculars—something new has been added.

Oh, well, when we have some offspring we can always show them this cover and tell them to be good or the Bergey man will get them.

Of the stories, "Daymare" was too well written to be so short; however, we are grateful for the bright spot it created in an otherwise dull issue and hope for more of the same. Have a Xeno Zombie, Fredric, old space burn.

The Prize Winning Amateurs generally rate high on the scoreboard but "The Bubble People" instilled in us a desire to give up the attempt to read further before we had read two pages—which we did.

We believe that "Promotion to Satellite" was merely an attempt on the part of Ray Bradbury to improve his Italian dialect. It could stand a lot of improvement.

A dig to Wellman and his petal-headed Martians. My, my, what a large gripe and groan section you have. Mother Saturn reminds me of the bay windows on some of these Master Sigs. Hand me that manner, Sarge, and we'll crack a few heads before we blast off.

Kiwi Parker is in a dither over his boy Cummings and wonders why he hasn't seen any of our "Perfect work" in TWS. Well Bobby, it's just that we realize our efforts along that line would probably be as hackneyed as Cummings and so we are confined to the Simple, isn't it?

And, Hunter—last issue he accused us of being a low grade school boy. Now he calmly states that, "Mace is good—per usual" . . . confusion in the control room. Nevertheless, we are forced to admit that Gene swung a mean typewriter this trip.

Burgeson should keep a weather eye out for the man in the white coat.

Belligson—no hum.

We all shudder out of the smoke and Xeno fumes a word about that Jerky Jingle we dreamed up and indicted on you. It was directed at Katie Mack's "Ties of Steel," and not at "children of the Gods" as you implied in your comments. Anyway, we'll write no more such monstrosities if the other apes on this galactic scow will also refrain. Incidentally, Sarge, did you mean "the indefatigable Mace" or just plain windy?—J.T. Knox, Ky.

The old Sarge doesn't remember anything anybody said last voyage, Kiwi Mace—thank heavens, so you dope it out for yourself. Your communication goes into the jackpot practically uncensored, and may the great gods of space have mercy on your soul if you haven't got your data correct. Me, I'm going to have an aspirin highball. Funny how Xeno makes an aspirin tablet fizz, isn't it?

Well, we got trouble up in the second balcony now with a fugitive from Noah Webster's seminary.

A LIVING BLUR

By Ray Karden

Dear Slur-gent: In beginning, I wish to explain that the alliterative noun heading is purely and simply meant to indicate my thoughts of your conducting of letter columns. In other words, you be-foul the pages of what could be a good magazine; you tarnish the brightness of your letter writers with feeble onomatopoeic attempts at humor: you are definitely undesirable.

Pulsee keep your seat and let me explain: First, the corny incredibly dragging space lingo you make use of. It, my dear sergeant, went out with the Xeno Rebellion. This rebellion was directed and led by several hundred thousand readers of the magazine, *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, in 2450 A.D. One S. Sature, the objective of the rebels, was reported to have drowned in his private Xeno distillery, but later historians say that it is barely possible that he might have escaped by going backwards in time. Intensive

(Continued on page 116)



WONDERS OF WAR

The Role of Science in Combat on All Fronts



THREE-IN-ONE TORPEDO AMONG NEW INVENTIONS—A three-in-one torpedo that can blast an enemy ship in several places at once has recently been patented by inventor George Wise of Brooklyn and offered to the government without royalties. A central torpedo carrying two smaller auxiliary torpedoes attached to it is launched from conventional equipment now in use on planes and ships. As the mother torpedo nears the target, a time-controlled mechanism releases the brood of pups, which speed off to strike on either side of the main explosion.

ENGINE-CONTROL ON MULTI-MOTORED PLANES IMPROVED—An improved method of speed control and synchronization of engines on multi-motored aircraft has been invented by Erle Martin and Frank W. Caldwell of Hartford, Connecticut. From a single control lever, the speed of the engines can be varied at will, and they are kept in running harmony at any selected speed. The electrically-operated device can also be adapted to other vehicles powered by more than one engine. Make way for the multi-motored tank.

NEW AND SAFER HAND GRENADE DISCOVERED—A safer, cheaper hand grenade in the shape and size of a baseball has been designed by Earl D. Hibbs of Philadelphia for the nation's youths who have left the diamond for the battlefield. Danger of handling live grenades after removing the pin has been eliminated. When ready to pitch a strike at the Axis, the thrower removes a safety pin and hurls the grenade. The centrifugal force of the spinning ball moves two weights outward, carrying with them the locking pins which, in turn, activate the device which sets off the fuse. The precarious job of transporting grenades to the front is also made safer by Mr. Hibbs' invention.

RESCUE DEVICE FOR ENTRAPPED SUBMARINE CREW—For those who fight beneath the surface of the seas, a special lifeboat for submarines has been invented by John F. Donnelly of Oakland, California. The air-tight boat, shaped like a box, is set in a well in the submarine deck, the top being flush with the outer hull. When a crippled sub finds itself

unable to rise, the entrapped crew crawls into the rescue boat through a tube connecting with the main part of the sub. The tube is disconnected and closed, a wheel is spun which unbolts the lifeboat, and the buoyant box floats to the surface. Then the hatches and portholes may be opened.

NEW HEATER FOR PLANE TURRETS—Hard-to-heat gun turrets with transparent plastic domes, like those used on bombers, will provide better vision and comfort for gunners if the newly patented plan of Lynn A. Williams Jr. of Northfield, Illinois, is adopted. A heater of the internal combustion type is fastened to the outside wall of the compartment. Hot air is shot through a manifold by a blower into a passageway around the wall, then emerges from many fishtail-shaped nozzles placed in a circle around the lower edge of the turret dome. Flowing upward in thin layers along the walls, the heated air prevents frost or moisture condensation which would obscure the view of the gunner.

"GIBSON GIRL" SAVES AIRMEN DOWN AT SEA—Army airmen forced down at sea may be saved by the "Gibson Girl," a small radio transmitter with an hour-glass shape which sends the SOS distress signal when a crank is turned. The device was developed by the Signal Corps and is now standard equipment on all AAF planes. A small button on the face of the transmitter allows regular Morse code messages to be sent as well as the automatic SOS. It has already saved many lives.

GLIDER PLANE TORPEDO NOW DEVELOPED—

A new war invention is the glider torpedo to be projected from high in the air by fast-moving airplanes. Designed by Leonid A. Dunajeff of New York City, it has side fins for wings and a gyroscopically controlled rudder. Released from the plane, it glides at a predetermined angle instead of dropping to the surface like a bomb. It travels at a constant speed and, when the target is large, can be released from great distances. It can carry a single charge or a number of smaller bombs to be released by a timing mechanism in the Molotov breadbasket manner.

THE READER SPEAKS

(Continued from page 114)

efforts are being made to locate him, and a punishment of being made to intensively study the works of one Ra-cumina, a writer of the 20th Century, is promised. Most authorities, however, expect voluntary suicide from the culprit rather than this.

Second, your obnoxious attitude: Or, should I say attitudes. One reads one letter section in one of your magazines, and you have the general idea of, "All science-fiction fans are darlings; throw them out the space hopper, Frog Eyes." Then, some other time, when you are frustrated and corrugated, you keep saying, "A nice gory letter, Kiwi Kakkenhammer; cut me up into little bits, didn't you? Ha, ha, the old space dog sure does love all you little sadists."

But—but—we finally have the answer! In the first page of your letter column you mention your picture as being on the next. We look over there, hesitatingly, trepidatingly, hoping against hope that a photograft of Gargantua may have been substituted by a playful art editor, when we see: ATTENTION, SCIENCE-FICTION FANS . . . etc. Ha! Ha! Your secret is revealed, Saturn; we glee; your secret is indeed revealed. YOU ARE A LIVING BLURB. This explains everything, without requiring anything rational to mess things up. Advice from old Doc Karden is to do nothing about it; leave things as they are; do absolutely no writing, including the letter section; and finally, JOIN A CARNIVAL!

However, going on to more mundane, uninteresting things, we come to the Fall issue of TWS, obviously a quarterly now. Chad Oliver mentions something about an upward climb in his letter; I grieve for him if he has read it. I won't take up your time and my time by a wonderful analysis covering several pages, but will only mention the two stories worth mentioning:

THE BUBBLE PEOPLE takes first, only because it was not commercial hack; Bradbury's second, but awful—for him, of course. I am only wondering where you messed up the others . . . owie, owie, owie. . .

Now, as this issue seemed to be the last one in '43, I will try my hand at something they call the yearly report. Unfortunately, I haven't the February issue, but got the idea from letters that it wasn't so hot, with the exception of Bradbury's "The Piper." So it seems I will not miss much. . . . One thing that I notice, with hearty approval, is the slow but sure appearance of off-trail stories. Keep trying to get out of the rut and maybe someday you will.

First, the stories:

1. "The Lotus Eaters"—Very, very good. Completely refreshing, a very original style, but still uncontrolled and uncertain. I think the unanimous verdict on this would be more . . . enough of a hint?

2. "The Devil's Fiddle"—This is better written than the above, but not too original. A very concrete background, good characterization, able handling—all in all, one of the best straight fantasies I've read.

3. "Expedition"—An amusing satire on Martians and science-fiction in general; but that ending . . .

4. "The Conquest of Venus"—The only reason I am including this is the time-honored one of nothing else being good enough to take its place. However, the idea of sociological development as shown through a series of stories takes this far out of the dismal hack of this type. This could definitely stand to become part of a trilogy.

5. "Through the Blackboard"—Unexceptional, but a delightful whimsy, very entertaining. This is one of the purest fulfillment type, of course.

6. "The Bubble People"—As I have said before a couple of hundred pages back, definitely non-commercial. But Carlisle should cut down on the heightened language and try to eliminate some of his stiffness.

Those are all that could possibly be included, by any stretch of the imagination, in the mighty circle of the best. Rather few, but good; one of your best years yet, TWS—409 Twelfth Street, Cloguet, Minn.

Not only which, you split an infinitive smack-dab up the back in your second paragraph. But, outside of all you said, I'm in fairly good condition, am I not, Doctor? And the old craft, THRILLING WONDER STORIES, will survive, won't she?

No foolin', Kiwi Karden the old Sarge sorta cottons to your lingo. But that one word

"onomatopoeic" gets me. In plain Greek, what does it mean? If it means what I think it means, you're no lady, and I wasn't seen with you last night.

Now if the coroner has no last words to say, we'll get along to the next cage. Oh, yes, I nearly forgot. About that picture of the old Sarge. When the chief astrogator saw it he fell over in a faint, and it took three injections of Xeno to bring him around. In the



confusion we blasted off for the voyage without the portrait. Here it is now:

Get further, kiwis. Here's word from a junior astrogator who sort of missed the boat last voyage. So we'll listen to his ether wave on the August issue now.

SMOOTH SAILING

By Bill Blackbeard

Dear Sarge: The August issue of TWS, I thought, was one of the best you've edited yet—'twas so good I thought I'd take the time to rattle off a commendatory on said issue.

Illustrations: Finlay's, good. Orban's, good. Remainder terrible.

Literary contents: First, reviewing the yarns in order as they're listed on the contents page, we have "Exile to Centauri," which was just good, entertaining stuff. Well-written, competent.

Next, "Expedition," by Sherlock Boucher, who, for a detective story writer, seems to catch the mood of sf amazingly well. Delightful item this tale.

"The Lotus Eaters." Good. The author shows promise—very much, though a good bit of the story—chiefly in the descriptions of the character's thoughts and impressions—was unintentionally funny. But, it seems to me, he has the story-teller's gift known as "it." A bit more practice, and Bolling will go rolling along.

"Tubby—Atom-Smasher." Better-than-ordinary corn by the olde maestah.

"Sun Engine." Saturn, you old fox, this yarn was sorta cute. Gad! Xeno is even seeping into the stories now!

"Visiting Yokel." Hilarious. Best in the issue. Kennedy—based on the cinema's "Slow-burn" Edgar Kennedy, no doubt—and McBriar—based on God knows who—would make a swell pair to do a series about, if said series is not allowed to pall on the readers, as have Kuttner's Pet Manx hi-links.

Uh-oh—almost overlooked "The Amnesia." This was excellent. Superb. The best "amateur" story you've yet printed. This fellow handles his work with the hand of a master.

Keep up the good work. You're doing fine—216 Orchid Ave., Corona Del Mar, Calif.

For a junior pee-lot who comes late, you do a pretty fair job of carrying apples to the teacher, Kiwi Blackbeard. So the old senior astrogator will let you off with this mild reprimand. Okay for this time, junior—but get your duffle on board in the future before we take off on the voyage in question. That goes for the rest of you astrogation students and

cadets, too. Now that we are making only quarterly runs for the duration, we are not going to carry any cargo pertaining to stories and pictures and covers too far in the past. Remember our six-year-old group of trainees. They can't remember that far back.

And before you space monkeys get to suspecting that the old Sarge really believes that about you, we'll pause here for station announcements and toss in a communique that is strictly technical. Maybe this will raise the I.Q. of this department. It will raise the temperature, anyway.

HIS BLOOD'S A-BOILING

By Prentis Carter

Dear Sarge: I want you to title this little rendezvous in your conning-tower, "His blood's a-boiling." Am I mad? No, I'm not mad. Just a friendly discussion with N. Nielson as regarding HEAT RADIATION of a body in space.

Last issue his letter read: "I was glad to see that no one was instantly frozen to death by being exposed to space in this issue. I may be mistaken, but I believe an object suddenly immersed in the vacuum of space would tend to remain at its original temperature, as no matter would be present to conduct the heat, or otherwise absorb it. At any rate, such heat as would be lost, would be lost through radiation, which would be far from instantaneous. . . . Heat would be gained faster than it would be lost due to lack of a circulating medium such as the atmosphere."

Amigo—fellow Californian to out-of-staters—you've hit it! Or rather you've missed it. Even in the deadiest vacuum you ever saw or imagined, there would be a CIRCULATING MEDIUM SUCH AS THE ATMOSPHERE. THERE WOULD BE THE ATMOSPHERE. Nothing else. And would YOUR BLOOD BOIL!

I suppose you, in common with the lot of us, have done some sweating in your time. Then you'll realize that the cool, tingly feeling that comes of sweating is due to EVAPORATION that absorbs heat from your body.

Let's consider a body tossed out into what we shall say is a perfect vacuum. Your contention is that it could only lose heat by radiation.

Consider this however. AIR penetrates WATER. A hundred quarts of water at ordinary temperature will take up about two quarts of air. So help me!—it's a fact.

Air under atmospheric pressure (about 15 pounds per square inch) penetrates your body, not only the lungs, but the blood vessels, muscles, and microscopic cells. The pressure is equal inward and outward, that is normally. You feel no pressure. But if the pressure becomes unequal—Oh boyoy! In space, the result would be similar to a deep-sea diver coming up from a depth where his body has become adjusted to an internal pressure of say, forty pounds, to the upper outer pressure of fifteen pounds. You know what happens. The bends.

In space, the sudden release of all outer pressure would tend to form air bubbles in the blood, clogging the circulation. There'd be severe pains in the joints, deafness, paralysis, and maybe death. Why worry about a little thing like freezing?

Furthermore—the lowering of ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE on the outside of the body would result in bursting of blood vessels, certainly in the lungs and mucous membranes if not all over the outer surface, and the water content of the blood would BOIL AWAY. The evaporation of this water would ABSORB HEAT, and would do it pretty darn fast too. Not instantaneously of course—I'll grant you that. Nothing is instantaneous.

But if my reasoning is correct there would be three direct means whereby an unprotected body in space would lose heat.

1st. Radiation.

2nd. Convection, through release of air penetrating blood.

3rd. Absorption, through boiling off of blood, draining heat from bodily tissue. There might be the additional loss of heat through convection as the gases left the vicinity of the body.

4th. . . .

Well, there might be a fourth, depending on the degree of consternation with which the individual faced such a dilemma. At any rate, it looks to me as though a fellow would tend to cool off pretty quickly.

[Turn page]

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Anyway, it's a comforting thought on some of these exceptionally CALIFORNIAN sunny summer days. Isn't it, *Amigo?*—*Sam Bernardino, Calif.*

As it so happens that the old Sarge ventures out into space without his space suit zippered up and the heating unit functioning, I wouldn't know from experience exactly what happens to a fellow. So you argumentative birds thresh this problem out between you. All I can say is that Xeno and aspirin do things to the old space dog right here aboard ship.

To get back to the gnawing of the bones of the Fall cargo.

THE ETERNAL OPTIMIST

By Bill Stoy

Dear Sarge: The Fall TWS is slightly sleep-pointing after the last two issues. Let's hope this is merely a temporary lull. Ah, the eternal optimist!

There's only one thing wrong with the cover this time—besides the fact that it isn't good. The picture doesn't add up to a cohesive whole, doesn't create a unified impression. The effect should be one of action, and the speed-blurred rockets and the battle scenes jibe with that. Yet at the same time in the foreground, a group of men are seen motionless and with almost photographic clarity. It's incongruous! A low bow to Bergey for his effective ruminations of a nice cover.

Brown's "Daymare" is one of the two stories in this issue to measure up to the very recent TWS standards. Strange . . . or perhaps not so strange, but with science-fiction as well as detective yarns, Brown seems to turn out consistently good work. "Daymare" is a well-turned bit, a neat work of craftsmanship . . . the best in this issue.

"The Bubble People" is the other of the two tales. Nice writing, even if description and ten-dollar words were overworked, while the action was rather minimized. At least it's a relief from action-imregnated hack!

A rather simple plot to "Promotion to Satellite." Maybe that's why I like Bradbury's tale well enough to put it third. Earth-shaking events are not always necessary for good story-telling.

"Peril on Phoebe" is a fair enough item to place fourth. Ah me, that plot is the old standby of s-f . . . the scientific fact—that-tacked-to-the-end-of-a-story-saves-the-hero-and-immediately-makes-the-story-science-fiction. Fifth and sixth respectively are "The Man From the Stars" and "That's Just Like a Martian," neither of which is good or bad enough to merit more than a fleeting impression of their contents. "Light in the Darkness," on the other hand, receives a certain amount of attention as a particularly dull and insipid hack filler.

Pretty good artwork for the science detective yarn. Looks familiar, but whodunnit? The rest is passable if not better.

Articles are monotonously fair as usual, although "The Reader Speaks" seems to have hit the doldrums momentarily. The readers' letters are not at fault; the long stretches of nothingness between the missives seem to be the cause of loss of interest. Hmmm, Sarge?

Quarterly publication is about due, I suppose. Too bad. But my elephantine memory hints that the 5th Anniversary issue should not be too many oons away. And if it's anything like the June '59 issue. . . —140-92 Burden Crescent, Jamaica 2, N. Y.

So you're going to lay your temporary distaste for The Reader Speaks on the old Sarge, eh? You know, kiwi, it's a thrilling experience to be like an item on sale in a bargain basement. You get pulled apart by so many different people and from so many different angles. Good thing the senior astrogator was put together on the order of Grag. Too much space lingo—not enough space lingo—too hard on the junior pee-lots—not hard enough on the junior pee-lots—too highbrow—too lowbrow

—too much chatter by the Sarge—not enough chatter by the Sarge. Quick, Frog-eyes, the Xeno jug!

The anniversary issue you inquire about so coyly, Pee-lot Stoy, may depend on the progress of the war. We'll see about that later. You won't let me forget, will you?

DAYMARE TAKES FIRST PLACE

By Robert K. Pavlat

Dear Sarge: Three cheers for Marty C. Seligson. You know, the guy who wrote criticizing "The Reader Speaks" in the Fall issue of T.W.S. Of course I disagree with many of his policies such as not abbreviating T.W.S. ed. mag. etc. But, it was Marty who managed to squeeze this long-awaited "first" out of me.

As to Marty C. Seligson's criticisms of "The Reader Speaks," he's right. Sarge, you'll never get any letters showing some signs of intelligence unless you follow some policy such as this: Cut your "The Reader Speaks" down in size until you start getting letters showing some improvement in brain power. I'll guarantee that it won't be long before the department is back up to the same old size, this time with brainy letters (like mine) taking up the space. It wasn't your fault that the letters went sour on you, Sarge, but such a plan as the one outlined above will, I believe, straighten out the ones now coming in.

Man, as you undoubtedly know, is a funny animal. "The Readers Page" in T.W.S. probably got off to a good start as do all readers pages. But, some kiwi wrote a low-rate letter (such as most of those now appearing in "The Reader Speaks") and you Sarge, let it slip in. Then another dope followed the example set before him, and then, a progressive course downwards.

Not meaning to insult the intelligence of your readers. They're just following the natural tendency to write as those before them have written. How about it? Let's get a real readers page in T.W.S. Come on now, anyone with any ideas for improving "The Reader Speaks" send them in. An improvement of the mag. is sure to follow any intelligent discussion of what's wanted and needed. T.W.S. is on the upgrade; let's give it an additional boost.

Yes, TERRIBLE WONDER STORIES is on the upgrade with stories such as "The Devil's Fiddle," "Through the Blackboard" and "Daymare" appearing with increasing regularity. "The Devil's Fiddle" was excellent, in my knowledge, only by "The Moon Pool" by Merritt, and the "Arc of Fire" by John Hawkins.

As to this Fall issue, "Daymare" takes first place. I don't know why, its plot was nothing to brag about, however the characters were well worked out and there was a steady stream of surprising events, all nicely tied together to make sweet reading. 9.2.

"The Man From the Stars" came in second with a much used, but well handled plot. Always depend on Robert M. Williams to give you a story in the top brackets. 9.0.

Third place was carried away by "Promotion to Satellite" with a rating of 8.9. Yes, Pietro is now a "beeg man."

"Peril on Phoebe" nabs fourth with 8.0 while "Bubble People" receives 7.8 for fifth.

The other two? They filled up space but that's about all they did. Still though, we'll give it to "Light in Darkness" with 4.6.

Surprise! Bergey turned out another nice cover. Maybe someday he'll catch up with himself on all the minus ratings I've given him.

That's all for now, Sarge; be seeing you around Pluto when you go to pick up your next load of Xeno. You see, I'm a revenuer.—1516 Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago 28, Ill.

For a first appearance, Pee-lot Pavlat, you polish up the brasswork nicely. Don't think that the old Sarge is deliberately specializing on any type of letter in this department. You junior astrogators write in, and if your communications are plain vindictive or libelous, they'll sure go right into the cargo—all of



them, that is, that we receive in time and have space for.

WHERE ARE THE BOW ROCKETS?

By Dan Wilhite

Dear Sarge: Hold out your hand for a coat. I'm backing up everything Marty C. Seligson said in the Fall issue, and putting in my two cents' worth to boot. I'll not do any running, either, because who is afraid of a sharpshooter when all he's got is a hot-air powered pop-gun? No wonder the general public thinks all Science Fiction readers are moronic-imbeciles; look what is being offered in proof.

Who gives a (censored) what Johnnie Stinkweed over in Goofer Hollow thinks about "Daymare." If I liked it, I liked it and no number of people disliking it can change my opinion. Ditto, if I should have thought it a turkey.

From the way some of those yokels howl you would think that stories grow on vines, and all the editor has to do is walk down the turnrow and pick off the ripe red luscious stories to taste 'til the basket is full. I can't believe that very many ever heard of a rejection slip, let alone saw one. Just keep an eye on the circulation figures and let those hounds keep on yapping at the moon.

I have another pet peeve that those Oh-So-Smart John Blows do not seem to have ever mentioned. How do they reconcile the various writers' conceptions of the operation of a rocket ship with the visual images the artists give to go with the stories? I can't. Every story that contains flight in space at one time or another speaks of the bow rockets being brought into operation. Now I've been brought to believe that in any space flight the deceleration must equal the acceleration in power. From this I conclude that the bow rockets would in all probability be equal in size to the stern rockets. But what do the artists hand us? A sleek Greenhouse nose and a 100% rocket tube rail. I've watched and watched and never have I seen a picture that shows even the vestige of a bow rocket. It just does not make sense. Either acquaint the artists with the writers' ideas of space flight or get the writers to use a theory by which these alleged space ships can stop once they get started. (You can stop a truck by running into the side of a bluff, but it doesn't do the truck any good.—3213 Maryland Ave., Little Rock, Ark.)

You know, Kiwi Wilhite, you've got something there, and I hope every artist who paints
[Turn page]

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and illustrates scientification sees your letter. Seriously, illustrating in this field is quite an art and requires a high imagination as well as considerable technical knowledge. It really is surprising that there aren't more ludicrous errors than do creep into the pictures. There are a lot of other things to be taken into consideration, too, that you astute junior peels wot not of, too, but this isn't an art class, so we won't go into that here. Instead, we'll let the next ethergram hold forth on the subject.

ARTWORK FOR THE YEAR

By Paul Carter

Dear Sarge: Herewith, the report on 1943.

First: as many jugs of Xeno as you can consume are hereby issued for the most revolutionary step taken by T.W.S. (and, indeed, the whole trio) this year: the sudden, unexpected, and decidedly welcome improvement of the covers.

Behold, fans! Here stands TWS, at one time the strongest bastion of raw coloration, frightened maidens, lean-jawed heroes, and mile-a-minute action, not to mention that hardy perennial, the B.E.M. And lo! In the five 1943 issues of the mag, what a change has manifested itself! For during this hallowed period there was NO artwork at all by the notorious Mr. Belarski! There was but one frightened maiden! The color-contrasts are so much better it's unbelievable! And, although the first three of the five covers portrayed monsters, even the hideosities were different; February's monsters, though bug-eyed, were at least humorous—April's were shown in rear view, a distinct improvement—and only June's B.E.M. could be called an abomination of the old school, though at that it's pretty tame compared with the creations of the unlamented Conrade H. V. Brown, and even some of Bergy's earlier ones.

The plunging rocketships of August and Fall represent such a refreshing change that a hope is kindled in the hearts of the fans: perhaps the ghost is laid. Perhaps the spaceship has become the dominant motif of TWS's covers. Perhaps TWS is out of its rut! If so, hearty applause and roll out another barrel of Xeno.

As for the interior artwork: Finlay, naturally, reigned as undisputed king of this department of the magazine. Wesso, to our shocked horror, was represented by but one illustration in the entire year—in the current issue. Marchioni, experimenting in styles, was alternately lifted up and cast down, eventually landing on the credit side of the ledger. As for the others—please, let's not discuss them.

And, now—the stories. Only five will be listed, as it has just struck me that in five issues a magazine can't publish so very many yarns, and consequently previous listings of mine were decidedly unfair. Besides, look at all the authors we've lost since war was declared. Five it is, then—and in no definite order of merit. Here they are, listed chronologically:

"The Piper," by Ray Bradbury. A beautiful little piece of work, demonstrating that Mr. Bradbury is definitely the Great White Hope of 1943. Do a little more digging, Sarge, as we're going to need other new men to fill in the gaps.

"The Devil's Fiddle," by N. R. de Mexico. All right, friends, all right, it was a fantasy. Why all the hostility? Is there, then no kinship whatsoever between science-fiction and fantasy? Then why is it that a substantial proportion of fans read and enjoy both?

Aside from the classification, I believe all will concede the above yarn to be a definite first-rater of its type. Anybody want to disagree?

"Grief of Bagdad," by Kelvin Kent. After "De Wolfe of Wall Street," I was afraid Pete had slipped for good. I see that he hadn't. Gentle hint: Mr. Kutner, Pete is much better when managing shady deals in the more or less remote past than when delving into paradoxes of Time. Just a suggestion.

"The Lotos Eaters," by Bolling Branham. Another who has stirred up a hornet's nest, apparently. When, o ye critics, will you realize that, beyond and above the "science-vs-fantasy" issue, this is one of the smoothest and best-written pieces old T.W.S. has ever seen? That, after a deluge of hack, hack, HACK, it did a lot toward restoring the magazine's shaky prestige? It is hereby requested that Mr. Branham return—often—and if he

wants to use Tennyson for his chapter headings, let him go to it with official blessing.

And finally we have "Expedition" to consider. Mr. Boucher is one of the cleverest authors in the stf game today; his unusual type of work is sorely needed by T.W.S. to offset some of the garden-variety thud-n'-blunder. I'm glad he had the Martians tumble to the trick at the end of the story, because now nobody can accuse him of writing a variation on the "earthman-outwits-invaders" theme. This means, however, that any form, shape, or size of sequel to this brief epic is out. Definitely.

Probably the most peculiar feature about this list is that all the stories on it are shorts or novelets—usually the novels are first and the small fry nowhere. As a matter of fact, your longer material this year has ranged from "good" ("Through The Blackboard") through "terrible" ("Exile to Centauri"), with the rest falling somewhere betwixt and between. One reason for this is a shortage of authors, of course. Another is the awkward length—too long for a novelette, but too short for anything really ambitious. Maybe you should discard the "novel" idea for the duration—or else get Mr. Binder to write another "Via" saga. How about it?—150 So. University St., Blackfoot, Idaho.

You know, Pee-lot Paul, the old Sarge finds little at which to take umbrage in your communiqué. Let some disgruntled kiwi sink his teeth into you. I'm going to pour me a nice long slug of Xeno and read the next letter.

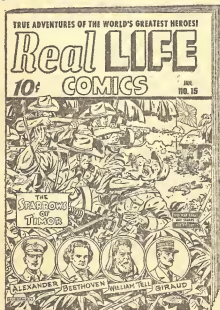
FROM DAYMARES TO DAYDREAMS By James Russell Gray

Dear Sarge: I come from a long line of letter writers. We think nothing of whipping out fountain pen or typewriter and dashing off page after page. At the least excuse. Although I consider the Fall, 1943, issue of TWS an excellent excuse.

Take the cover. Some of the best mags have them. And your latest effort is very effective. Some may feel it's too garish. Me, I'm just a roughneck—I like 'em garish. Even lurid. My favorite cover is where a good-looking gal, plump and shapely, is chased by a frightful BEM.

The Reader Speaks department is improving. And I'm glad to see you're giving it more space. [Turn page]

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Such a department can be the most interesting thing in a magazine. Personally, I always turn to the letter section first. Glad to note, Sarge, that your comments are growing more tactful. Less caustic. I consider your answer to Ray Karden, for instance, a masterpiece of self-control and understatement. Hang on to that light, tolerant touch.

This is my first letter to you. I am three years old. I consider "The Black Flame" by Stanley Weinbaum one of the best ever written. That was in *Startling Stories*, I think—anyway it's all in the family. I would appreciate it, Sarge, if you, or some of your readers, would help me obtain a copy of that story. I want to read it again.

I notice the fans discuss Ray Cummings a lot. In my opinion he's a top-notch writer. But I do get awfully annoyed at him now and then. And I have to admit that I think he deserves part of the criticism he stirs up. Nobody can deny he uses certain story situations over and over. For instance the battle of the flying girls and the army of the villain. With the hero carried through the air on a raft. Another thing, I don't like the mile-a-minute, condensed-like-a-newspaper-headline, style he sometimes uses. Despite which, believe it or not, I think he's a great writer.

Your inside art work is good enough. If that seems faint praise, remember we STF readers are a critical lot. (I can name you magazines in which one guy does all the inside artwork. Said work being awful.) I like the pic for Wellman's story best, I think. How's for slipping me the gal's phone number, hey, Sarge?

Maybe I'm in a good mood, but I have only a few insulting remarks to offer about the stories this trip. They measure up right well. Every author, except the amateur, is a top-night writing man. This here now Fredric Brown is a sooper-dooper. A genius, no less. Williams is swell, too. The story "Man From The Stars" was something I'd like to write myself. I've often daydreamed about an alien being that came to Earth and gave me wonderful powers. Ever do that yourself, Sarge? What gift would you choose if you could have anything you wanted, but were limited to one wish? Would you take invisibility, immortality, the ability to read minds? I like to think about it.

I'm cutting my remarks short about the other stories, except to say they're okay, because I want to comment on "The Bubble People." This boy Carlisle has the imagination to write science-fiction. His basic idea is splendid. But, Mr. Carlisle, you sling too many ten-dollar words. I quote: "...elicited a dazzling chromatic display of coruscation and opalescence." Unquote. Nix, pal. That isn't the way to do it, believe me. Lay off those big words. Be careful of too much straight narration; mix in plenty of action and dialogue. I think you have the makings of a fine writer. This criticism is offered in a friendly spirit. And I honestly wish you lots of luck.

And to you, Sarge, and to TWS, I offer the following toast: "Here's to your health! Success, and a long life!"—Box 204, Hartshorne, Okla.

Nice ethergram, Pee-lot Gray. But don't embarrass the old space dog by inquiring after



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ing for you in Tibet." He wants to tell the whole world what he learned there, under the guidance of the greatest mystic he ever encountered during his 21 years in the Far East. He wants everyone to experience the greater health and the Power which there came to him.

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As a first step in their progress toward the Power that Knowledge gives, Mr. Dingle wants to send to readers of this notice a 9,000-word treatise. It is free. For your free copy, send your name and address to the Institute of Mental-physicists, 213 South Hohart Blvd., Dept. H-189, Los Angeles 4, Calif. Write promptly.



his daylight reveries. Sure, I have 'em. But I could be put in jail for the public airing of same. You know, you can't put all the best desires and wishes of the human heart in just one bald wish. Even when you apparently do so by the fortunate use of one word, by implication you mean far more than just one item. For example, if the old Sarge had the opportunity right now of making such a choice, he would choose (speaking for today's publication only) the gift of happiness.

Simple, isn't it? But that one word implies much more than personal pleasure for the old space dog. It means that the world would be at peace, that everybody even remotely connected with the Sarge would be happy, too. It—well, it means so much that we haven't got time to deliver a sermon on the subject. So, wipe the moisture out of your eye, Saturn, and get on with your chores.

Here comes a stern rocket blast from that incorrigible fellow over yonder in New Jersey.

TODAY'S MENU

By Joe Kennedy

Dear Sarge: Let us sink our teeth into the Fall Issue. The contents, by the way, will be rated by a new (I hope!) method—if fiction were rationed, how many points would each story be worth? Heh! Heh! We shall see. Sixteen points is a classic, 16 being one week's allowance of points.

The cover! Stupendous! Best cover I've yet seen on your publication! Hope this keeps up—give it all 16 points.

But now to our fiction feast. For an appetizer, let's take the Amateur Story Contest Winner, THE BUBBLE PEOPLE. Nice idea, but to be good, a yarn needs more than ideas. Sort of stiff style. If Carlisle can do better... Well, that remains to be seen. Eight red points.

[Turn page]

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While we wait for the main course, how about a few more "H" snacks? Here's **PROMOTION TO SATELLITE**, as served up piping hot by Ray Bradbury. A first rater. Action, style, characterizations, ideas—and so on into the night. Twelve blues. **BLUES IN THE NIGHT!**

Oh, yes. Sample this bit of soup by Wellman. Bah! Too cold! Tell the waiter to take it back and warm it up a bit. Nine red points, and 'tain't worth it.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS is la Morrison needs an extra dash of salt. As it is, 'tis a wee bit on the tasteless side. Ten blues.

Ah! Here's the main course of our meal! **DAY-MARE** as dished out by Fredric Brown. Alas! The main course turned out to be a tough one. Detectives! What next? How cute of the author to work it into a nice unsolvable mixup—and then explain it all away by saying that the characters were hypnotized when they saw seemingly incredible events take place. Brown never did get around to a satisfactory explanation as to why everybody else on the planet was hypnotized, but our 'andsome 'ero wasn't. Like too many pulp Sherlock Holmes tales, the pace of the story moved like a speeding express train, then let the reader down with a painful jolt. Don't waste your points, folks.

For dessert, let's have a couple of juicy novelets. Bonp's **EROR** ON PROBEUS, 'rinstance, 'Tweren't bad, but tweren't so good, either. (Incidentally, the pic for this yarn was the only good one in the whole mag. Twelve red points for the story, 15 for the illust.)

Topping everything off comes **MAN FROM THE STARS**. Best tale of all. Too many sentences were overly brief and clipped, but the manner in which the events were unfolded boosted it to the peak position. 14 Blues. Of course, I won't mention that there was hardly any science in it and that it was almost pure fantasy, thus out of place in TWS. No, I won't bother to mention that.

Our beverage: **XENO**, of course. So saying, let us turn to **THE READER SPEAKS**. Seligson is correct about fan letters except for one all-important detail, which he skipped. There's no denying that most people do get a "kick" out of all the monkey biz that goes on in the letter department. Print nothing but solid suggestions and watch the circulation do a nosedive downward.

Maybe I'd better answer Chad Oliver's comments to the effect that my I.Q. is as low as an ant's toenails. So he doesn't like my jingles! Your own poetry is pretty much on the morbid side, Chad, so we're even. **THE DEVIL'S FIDDLE** was a choice bit of fantasy. Don't get the impression that I don't appreciate good fantasy along with the next guy. No, my pet peeve is still Fantasy in a S-F-mag. If I panned the fiddle too much, 'tis because the only way I can make anything penetrate the old Sarge's perpetual Xeno-fog is to make it forceful.

I see that TWS is going to use even more fantasy. Ouch! Realizing that any efforts on my part to complain to the management would be as useful as tossing pebbles at the Rock of Gibraltar, I merely offer two suggestions: (1) Drop the slogan "Scientification's Leading Magazine" (2) Rope off the fantasy story separate from the others, as you do with the Amateur Story Contest Winners.

By reading the beginning of the letter column, I deduce that somebody sent in a drawing of the senior astrologer. According to the Sarge, the pic was supposed to be printed on the next page. However, said pic is nowhere to be seen. How come?

Anyway, I'm inspired. Enclosed herewith is a magnificent cartoon of the chief Xeno guzzler. Do with it what you will, 'tis merely to prove that I can do other things beside writing corny limerix and insulting the Sergeant.—84 Baker Ave., Dover, N. J.

Sorry that we haven't space for your picture of the old Sarge, Kiwi Kennedy. Perhaps we can squeeze it in next issue. Meanwhile, I leave all you little ogres with some matter for thought and discussion this voyage.

Let's get on to an explanation of what has probably been worrying you methodical junior astrologers of fixed habits. The chief astrologer has decided to combine the **LOOKING FORWARD** department with **THE READER SPEAKS**. Thus, henceforth at the close of this department, we will post the important items previously printed in **THE READER SPEAKS**.

THE SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE

Things are rather quiet in this section at the moment. No charters were issued this month for new chapters. However, new members are still joining the League. If any of you junior astrogators have not done so, you will find the proper application coupon at the bottom of this page.

To join the SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE all you have to do is send your name and the name strip of this magazine. There is no expense and no obligation. Should you desire an emblem for a more ostentatious display of your allegiance—and so the old Sarge can distinguish you from the mere passengers—just include fifteen cents in stamps with your coupon, and we'll send you a nifty gold, blue and maroon SFL button.

Remember, it is up to you science fans to keep the SFL alive and active. And the old space dog will always find room in the pages of this department for items and news from you of nation-wide interest to the SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE.

Austin Hamel asks us to print this blast:

The Cosmic Kings, a new science fiction club, is anxious to get ten members for a charter, there are six members at the present. If you live in the Bronx and wish to join an sf club, male or female, please get in touch with the address to be found on bottom. Please state age. (We would like to have a mixed age group), so if your 8 or 80, write in, also state the days you are free, and last but not least your 3 favorite mags.—2090 E. Tremont Ave., Bronx, 62, N. Y.

THE AMATEUR STORY CONTEST

Here the old Sarge feels like gnashing his teeth. This voyage we have nary announcement of winners to make, outside 2 yarns already promised. But next issue, how about you kiwis having sent in enough stories to compel Saturn to announce a lot of winners and Honorable Mentions?

The rules, as you should know by now, are simple. Just type your story out in any length up to six thousand words on one side of standard white paper, double-spacing your lines [Turn page]

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STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933, of Thrilling Wonder Stories, published quarterly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1943. State of New York, County of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared H. L. Herbert, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of Thrilling Wonder Stories, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Publisher, Better Publications, Inc., 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y.; Editor, Harvey Burns, 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y.; Managing Editor, None; Business Manager, H. L. Herbert, 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y. 2. That the owner is: Better Publications, Inc., 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y. N. L. Pines, 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are none. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. H. L. Herbert, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1943. Eugene Wechsler, Notary Public. My commission expires March 30th, 1945.

and leaving about a one-inch margin around the border. Choose any subject you please and inject the scientific angle into it. That's all. The only qualification is that you have never sold a story before.

Address your manuscript to the Amateur Story Contest Editor, THRILLING WONDER STORIES 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. and the old Sarge will see that you get expert attention. The prize is payment for winners at our regular rates. So, come on, gang!

LOOKING FORWARD

Right about here the senior astrologer pulls off his jumper and rolls up his sleeves. I'm going to tell you what we're Looking Forward to in the next issue—and you're gonna like it, see?

The featured novel, which goes into the forward hatch just abait the control chamber, is a different sort of space conquest and intergalactic travel yarn by Charles W. Harbaugh. The title of it is STAR OF TREASURE. It begins on Earth, hops to Mars, and then makes an express jump to another star system hundreds of light years away from old Sol. And don't start arguing about how anybody should live so long.

Author Harbaugh uses a shortcut that makes a local freight out of Captain Future's vibration Drive and the common or garden variety of space warping the several dimensions. And he brings his characters back home, with half an hour allowed for lunch at the Spacemen's Café on one of the planetoids in Andromeda.

It's the trek of the week, and don't you wish you could do it?

The novlet which fits snugly down the next hatchway is called VEIL OF ASTELLAR, this is a fast-blasting yarn of fantastic adventure right here in our own Solar System. It is by Leigh Brackett—yeah, a lady astrologer—and does that gal give the old English language a thorough workout! You space yardbirds are going to find this novelet one of the most gripping and vivid stories you've rocketed into for a long time.

The Amateur Prize-winning Story is by another gal writer—and does the old Sarge love to cram this sort of information down your gullets. UNSUNG HERO, by Ruth Washburn, is the story of a mild little Chicago inventor who invents an ingenious way to clear up an unaccountable obstruction in the Chicago River and solve a headache for a colony of beings in another dimension. And if you think you can write a better "first" story, why the blankety-blank don't you do it and send it in?

Sure, there'll be other stories and features. We'll crowd the cargo in so tight that you birds won't have more than enough space to polish the brasswork in the rocket-room. As for making dizzy flights and commotions, you'll have to make them in the corridors. In fact, we may—just possibly, we may—have to leave out of the cargo one case of Xeno for the old space dog.

Now get back into your cages and start picking the cargo of this present voyage to pieces. Hand me the powdered aspirin, Frog-eyes, and go look for a new nova. I'm hunting the old coma.

—SERGEANT SATURN.

Meet This Issue's Amateur Contest Prize-Winner!

An Autobiographical Note by the
Author of "Moon Trap" (See Page 73)



John Foster West

NOW, at the age of 23,
I am a junior at the
University of North Carolina. I am a journalism major.

I was born on a farm in a three-room house very little more substantial than the one Lincoln lived in, and worked about as hard. I spent the first eighteen years of my life digging, hoeing, and plowing up the foothills of western North Carolina. At the age of eighteen I went to work in a psychopathic institution where I remained for over two years. Since then I have been in college.

As far back as I can remember I have been writing. First it was poetry, later stories, and finally newspaper articles. I wrote my first poem at the age of eight and had my first one published (in a weekly newspaper) at the age of eleven. Since then I have had several poems published in large daily newspapers. I helped create my high school paper and under the honorary title of humor editor wrote most of it.

In 1940 I entered Mars Hill Junior College, a co-ed college of perhaps nine hundred students located deep in the mountains of western North Carolina. At Mars Hill I handled the publicity, both sports and general, for the two years I was there. I was also sports editor of the campus newspaper my first year and editor-in-chief my last year there.

I am six feet tall and weigh only one fifty-five pounds. However, I am inclined to athletics. I was a varsity letterman in football in both high school and junior college. I also held a good record for the mile and two mile run in junior college track, winning the South Eastern Junior College Conference championship two years. I am on the varsity cross country team here at Carolina; I hope to make the varsity track team next spring.

The story, *Moon Trap*, is not the first story I have ever tried to sell by any means. For years I have been interested in science fiction; I bought my first Wonder Story magazine back in 1931 when they were coming out in long, wide editions. Since then I have been trying to write science fiction.

It's a funny world. I wrote *Moon Trap* over five years ago, before I ever left the farm, but I did not try to market it until recently. This final result is very little different from the original MS.

Well, now that we know each other I am going to try to appear before you in the future. There is one small obstacle, however: I am in the U. S. Army Air Corps reserve, and will become a flying cadet upon graduation from Carolina.—John Foster West.

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THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

YOU doubtless remember Ross Rocklynne's **EXILE TO CENTAURI**, published a couple of issues back. He comes forward this month with a thought-provoking novelet called **THE INVISIBLE ARMY**. If you have already read the story you will enjoy



what he has to say about the yarn. If you haven't yet read it, this letter from the author will lend added zest to the reading.

Here is what Author Rocklynne says:

When, some time ago, I had published an article which included an outline of all possible *sf* plots and ideas, I was struck with the realization that none of my previously written stories came under the heading *Microscope*. Why not? I thought about it, with some surprise discovered that I considered the theme not only improbable, but impossible.

What? An *sf* writer make such a concession, a concession limiting the ingenuity of man, a concession which blanks out of man's future a whole new field of exploration, development, and colonization—the virgin worlds of the atom?

Well, no. I would not deny that man could effect a physical reduction in size, even to the bottom pit of smallness. I would not deny that he could swallow a pill, or wear a size-reduction belt (as in **THE INVISIBLE ARMY**) and eventually reach whatever dimensions he had chosen; but I would deny that he could arrive at any stage of smallness beyond the size of a molecule—*alive*!

Consider, now, the obstacle-ridden, death-laden path the adventurer must travel. That path where mere dust-particles become hurtling mountains. Well, check that danger out. Dust does not exist in the air in such tremendous quantities that our steadily shrinking wayfarer cannot by agility and watchfulness escape the consequences of a collision.

The same can be said for disease germs—skirt their colonies—be wary of lurking individuals of those armored beasts more awfully fantastic than those dreamed of by our most ingenious *sf* authors. Thus do the first objections to size-travel vanish, for those dangers are not potent enough to keep the traveller from arriving safely at sub-bacterial dimensions.

But beyond that? Beyond that, the Brownian

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Movement! The Brownian Movement—this was my main objection to atomic travel; this was the physical law, visible in action to the naked eye, which sets up an insurmountable molecular barrier to him who should progress that far alive; this was the stumbling block which prevented my writing size-reduction stories—until I wrote **THE INVISIBLE ARMY**.

Thus the thrill of the tale you read in this issue of **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**, thus the paradoxical "story behind the story." For it was with some astonishment that I realized that my objection to microscopic stories would make a good story idea in itself!

And I hope the story is good, too.—*Ross Rocklynne.*

SPACE COMMAND

From the microcosm to the macrocosm our next author takes us. From Author Robert Arthur we learn the following about **SPACE COMMAND**.

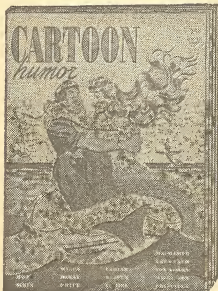
"Space Command" is a story of trans-planetary rocketing which I have visualized as in the same kind of transition stage as was commercial flying in the middle twenties. Flying passed from an individualistic, daredevil phase into the scientifically coordinated, carefully supervised, business-like medium of transportation it has become.

There is no more room in it for the 'seat-of-the-pants' flyers who flew by guess and by God and called any landing they could walk away from a good landing. Similarly, logic indicates (anyway, my logic indicates, and who's writing the story, anyway?) that rocketing, after being pioneered by the rough and ready boys who risk their necks cheerfully, will be taken over by the scientifically trained, highly educated men who will turn it into as safe and everyday an affair as possible.

This won't be too safe and too everyday, space being what it is; nevertheless, the transition will be tough on the pioneers, and there's bound to be a lot of friction between the representatives of the different orders when the time comes. "Space Command" treats of one small phase of that friction—shall we say?—2011 A.D. (June 14-15-16, S.T.S.* time, if I have to be exact).—*Bob Arthur.*

*Solar Terrestrial Standard time.

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